

# THE LONDON READER

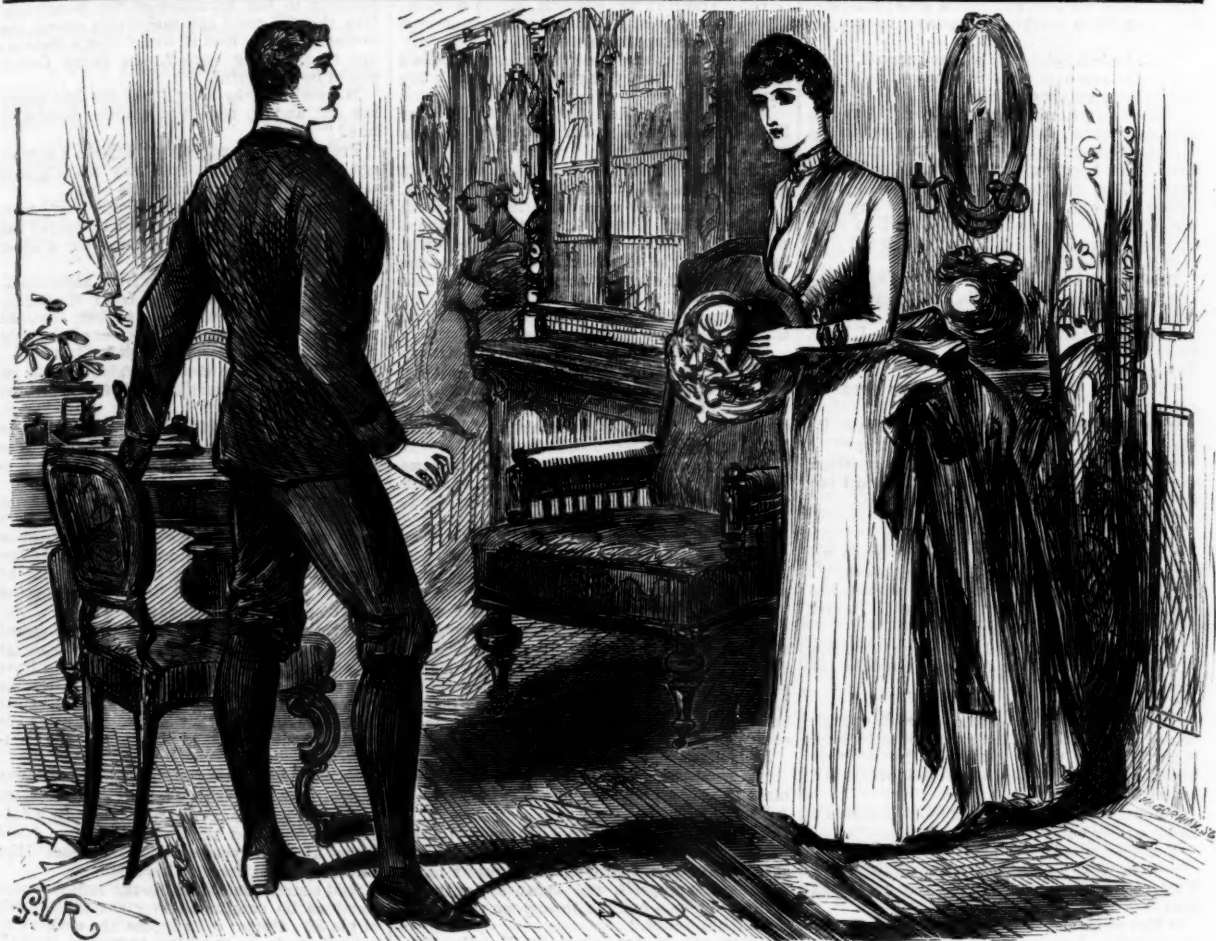
of Literature, Science, Art, and General Information.

[ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.]

No. 1369.—VOL. LIII.]

FOR THE WEEK ENDING JULY 27, 1889.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



["WHAT A GOOSE YOU ARE, BASIL!" FENELLA SAID.]

## THE CURSE OF THE LESTERS.

### CHAPTER III.

No, it was not Vana Tempest to whom Basil Lester had so all expectantly opened his arms, but the girl who stood before him with blushing cheeks was one well-fitted to take men's hearts by storm.

Fenella Devreux was an utter contrast to Basil's little love, and yet the one word, "beautiful," applied equally to them both.

Basil Lester stood dumbfounded; he knew at once he and his father had misunderstood each other; and that the portionless damsel Sir George was so ready to welcome as his son's wife was Fenella Devreux.

Every word the baronet had spoken applied equally to Fenella; and Basil might have guessed she was in his father's thoughts but for two all-important reasons. His own mind was thoroughly preoccupied with Vana, and he would have imagined—had Fenella entered his head—Miss Deborah Lester's favourite

protégée would, on account of his sister's preference, find no grace in Sir George's eyes.

She stood there fearlessly beside him; her large liquid eyes were raised to his face, her colour was deeper than usual; but there was not another trace of emotion about her.

Miss Devreux was a little over twenty, and no one knew very much about her parentage.

Miss Deborah had brought her home, ten years before, after a long foreign tour, and established her at the cottage as a sort of pet and plaything, and later on as a humble companion. She always declared she should never leave Fenella so much as a silver shilling. But in the meantime she carried the girl about with her wherever she went, and insisted that her friends should receive Miss Devreux as an equal.

Basil had known Fenella from her childhood, and he thought he had never seen her look more beautiful than now, as she stood gazing into his face and waiting for him to speak. She was so tall that she would have been awkward but for the perfect grace of her figure, and her erect easy carriage.

She wore a dress of amber muslin, confined

at the waist by a silver girdle; her blue-black hair was plaited in a coronal round her head. There was something almost tropical in her love for brilliant colours; she looked more like some bright daughter of the South than a calm, unemotional English girl.

It was perhaps the most awkward moment of Basil's life. He knew the instant he caught sight of Fenella's blushes that she was aware of Sir George's wishes. She had come to the library prepared to listen to his love-story, and lo! he had none to tell her. What was he to do? Almost chivalrous in his feelings, where women were concerned, he could not bring himself to say anything to show Fenella he divined her acquiescence in his father's views. The only course seemed to be to talk determinedly on indifferent subjects.

"You are an early visitor, Miss Devreux! I did not even know you and Aunt Deborah had come home!"

"Oh, yes, two days ago! I came up to spend the morning with your sisters, and when I met Sir George he sent me here, saying you wanted to talk to me."

Her frankness was terribly embarrassing.



Poor Basil wished for any interruption to break the *tic-à-tic*. He could not think what to say, and yet silence itself was almost impossible.

Fenella watched him for a moment, then her charming lips parted in a smile, and she cried merrily,—

"What a goose you are, Basil!" She had called him by his Christian name long ago, and clung to it long after he had begun to say Miss Devreux. "Why don't you tell me point blank Sir George made a great mistake, and you have nothing whatever to say to me?"

Basil looked helplessly on the ground. Fenella came a step nearer and laid one hand gently on his coat-sleeve.

"We have been friends so long," she said, sweetly, "that I feel I may speak to you freely just as though you were my brother. You have fallen hopelessly in love with the Vicar's pretty niece, but you are afraid to tell your father so; and so when Sir George suggests you should throw the handkerchief to poor little me, you haven't the courage to tell him it is otherwise disposed of!"

Basil opened his eyes. "Are you a witch, Fenella?" forgetting the more formal style in his agitation.

"Not the least in the world, but—I have two eyes, and I have watched you with Miss Tempest!"

"I hoped my infatuation was not so evident."

"Oh, I don't suppose other people saw it. Well, why don't you speak to Sir George?"

"I shall, the instant I have a position worthy of Vana's acceptance. Till then I see no use in angering him."

"And you are going away?"

"Who told you?"

"Sir George. He says you have made up your mind to ruin him, just for a chimera."

"But, Miss Devreux, at my age a man has surely a right to look out for himself? I must think of Vana and our future."

Fenella shook her head a little impatiently. "Sir George will be furious! He does not like the Tempests."

"Why not?"

"Because the Vicar was once rash enough to say that none of the precautions he took could possibly prolong his life by a single hour, so that he might as well enjoy the present."

"Fenella, I think that will of Uncle Simon's has been our curse!"

Fenella pouted.

"Well, your father is furious against the Vicar. I really don't advise you to confide in him."

"But what am I to do?" poor Basil was floundering hopelessly. "He will naturally ask the result of this interview, and then he must learn his mistake."

"Not at all."

Basil stared at his fair companion in utter bewilderment. Was she actually going to offer to sustain the rôle of his fiancée in order to blind his father a little longer? It was very kind of her, but he hardly liked the idea; and what would Vana say?

"Oh dear, no," said Miss Devreux, when he had contrived to put all this into words. "I wouldn't be engaged to any one on those conditions, and I expect Miss Tempest would be ready to pick my eyes out; but I can manage things for you beautifully if you like."

"How?"

"You must tell Sir George I have refused you!" Then as Basil looked a little dubious, "Oh, yes, you must; then, of course, it wouldn't be pleasant for you to stay here and meet me continually, and so, you see, you must go away."

Basil's face began to clear.

"It is awfully kind of you."

"Not at all. I expect Sir George will transfer his antipathy from Miss Tempest to me. You must tell your fiancée, Basil, she can trust me fully. I may be able to be of some use to you two poor distressed lovers."

"It will be delightful. If you knew the

weight it takes off my mind to know I leave Vana with a friend. You have been away so much since she came to the Vicarage that you can hardly know her well, but you will soon grow fond of her; she is the dearest little girl in the world."

Enter Lady Lester, expectation written on every line of her face. Basil's courage utterly forsook him; he simply fled from the room, and left Fenella to explain things as she pleased.

Basil's mother was a simple, kindly woman; albeit the perpetual anxiety her husband kept up had rather spoiled her temper.

"Well, my dear," she said, taking Fenella's hand in hers, "are you going to make my boy happy?"

Fenella carried Lady Lester's hand to her lips, and kissed it with a pretty foreign grace.

"I am not going to take advantage of his generosity and yours," she said, gently. "Basil is the heir of a noble family. I am nobody. I don't even know that I have a name of my own. It would be the height of baseness for me to chain Basil to a promise made before he knew the world and its cold judgment."

"I am quite sure Basil is not one to change."

Fenella smiled on Lady Lester with a strange light shining in her beautiful eyes.

"If Basil comes back to me in two years' time I do not say I would still refuse to listen to my own heart; but he must be free, perfectly free, in the meanwhile."

"But, my dear child, that is just what we don't want for him to go away. Basil is our only son, and Sir George is most anxious to keep him at home."

"But Basil wants to go away."

"It is very selfish of him. Where could we get another agent to do what Basil does for a mere hundred a year?"

"Aunt (that was Fenella's name for her protectress) says she knows just the person to suit Sir George; and he is a very frugal old man, who would be quite content with eighty pounds a year. Aunt says he quite doubled some nobleman's property up in the north; but it is too bleak for him, and so he wants to come south before winter."

Lady Lester shook her head.

"It would be much better if you and Basil married and settled here."

Fenella smiled sadly.

"I think Basil the noblest man in the world; but I won't marry him unless I am sure he knows his own mind. I want to be married for myself, not because aunt is willing to give a fortune to anyone who takes me off her hands."

"You put it too strongly, Fenella. My sister-in-law is only anxious to secure your future. I don't suppose she has spent a quarter of her income for years; and of course you will have all she has saved."

"She always declares she shall not leave me a silver sixpence," said Fenella, cheerfully.

"I think Basil believes it literally, and imagines I am as poor as the vicar's pretty niece."

"My boy is not mercenary."

"Of course not. He never guesses I am to have everything aunt can scrape together on my wedding-day, and that she is going to name me her heir in the trial for the great prize."

"She loves you better than anything in the world."

"I think she does." Here Fenella's voice was not quite steady. "She has never spoken an unkind word to me; and she declares she will never put me in such a position that I can look forward to her death."

"She must have saved a great deal."

"Well, she has a thousand a year from her godfather, and the same as Sir George from Mr. Simon's trustees. Then, of course, I ought not to say it to you, Lady Lester, but I think she stands a good chance of the great prize. You see, aunt never worries."

Poor Lady Lester was only too conscious of how terribly her husband worried.

"Deborah has not eleven children," she said, tartly; "it's easy for her not to worry."

This was the little scheme planned between Sir George and his sister—that Basil, who would inherit his father's title, and Fenella, who was to have a large sum on her wedding-day, should be man and wife.

Of late years Miss Deborah and her eldest brother had been content to forget their differences in the branches of the family; in fact, the old-maid had said civilly enough she meant to do her best to win Simon's fortune; but that, failing herself, she hoped George would be successful.

Meanwhile, why should not his boy marry her girl, and so have two chances instead of one?

Pressed on the subject of Fenella's parentage, Miss Deborah would say nothing save that her *protégée* came of gentle blood.

She had a great fear of Fenella being married for money, and so she had spread the report she did not mean to leave her a silver sixpence.

She had suffered so much from heart-loneliness and interested visits from mercenary friends before Ben came to her, that she wanted to get it out of the power of the only person she really loved to wish for her death; so all she had she meant to give Fenella on her wedding-day, provided the bridegroom were to her mind.

Sir George and his wife had known their sister's views for some months, but so long as Miss Deborah and Fenella were away, there was no need to speak to Basil.

His own heart seemed to wish to marry the way, and Sir George, who was not very hard-hearted, was quite delighted to think of the surprise in store for his boy when he heard that the beautiful girl he deemed peculiar would have forty thousand pounds on her wedding-day.

Fenella's tact and imagination had spared Basil a very mortifying interview with his parents, and opened the way for him to leave home without the slightest quarrel. But, while giving her credit for her good offices as he sat in his own room that night, reviewing the events of the day, Basil was hardly quite contented.

Fenella had behaved beautifully, he was sure of that, but both his father and mother seemed to think her rejection was only a conditional one, and that when he came home again after a year or two's absence Miss Devreux would listen to his suit.

"Of course she did her best," reflected poor Basil, as he ruminated over the tangled web of his love story. "I suppose she couldn't be actually rude in speaking to people of their own son, but I do wish she had told my mother that nothing in the world would induce her to marry me. As it is, I am sure my lady has not given up hope."

No, they had none of them given up hope. All Basil's belongings persisted in thinking it a conditional engagement, and he made himself almost frantic in trying to get them to take the right view of the case.

Miss Deborah was the most sensible. In duty bound he had to go and take leave of her, and the old woman said simply,—

"Fenella's a good girl, and I'm fond of her, Basil; but as to its being anything like an engagement, it's not. You're free and Fen's free, and you're not to write to each other. I don't like shilly-shallying. What are you going to do in London?"

Basil explained his good fortune—it really seemed so to him, poor fellow. An Irish landlord, non-resident, of course, had heard of Mr. Lester's abilities, and wished to secure them for himself. Basil Lester was engaged for three years to act as Lord Kilmore's agent and representative. The salary was good, the house convenient, and the county charming. There was to be a three months' trial before the arrangement was to be considered permanent. It was in Basil's mind



that at the end of these three months he would come home to Vale Lester and marry Vana, but we can quite imagine he did not tell this to his old aunt.

One trial he had and it was a heavy one: he did not see his *fiancée* again before he left Norfolk. Only two days after that meeting in the shrubbery, Mrs. Tempest received a visit from a cousin who was passing through on her way to Yorkshire, and this lady, struck by Vana's delicate, fragile look, and having withal a kind, motherly heart, begged to be allowed to take the girl home with her on a month's visit.

Vana would gladly have refused, but Mrs. Tempest had noticed her pale cheeks and heavy eyes, and insisted on her taking the opportunity of a holiday. So poor little Vana was hurried off to Whitby, and long before she came back to the Vicarage Basil had left for Ireland.

He saw a great deal of Fenella in his last fortnight at home. Had she been openly engaged to him his parents could not have invited her more constantly, or thrown them more closely together, and Basil, who honestly believed in Fenella's friendship, confided his grief to her at leaving without a sight of Vana.

He would talk to her of his little love by the hour together, and even left in her care a beautiful photograph he had just had taken, as a parting present for Vana which Miss Devreux undertook to hand to its real owner as soon as possible.

"Poor little thing!" he said, sadly, "she will have a dreary time of it when she comes home. I'm not a good hand at letters, Fenella, but I shall write as often as I can, and you must go and see her and tell her how sorry I was she was away."

"Of course I will," promised Fenella, sympathetically, "and shall I send her letters on for you? I suppose you will hardly like to write directly to the Vicarage?"

But Basil told her of the little post-office on Haverford Moor, and how Vana and he had arranged the letters should be sent there addressed to "Miss Brown."

"That is a famous plan," said Fenella, "but I should have been so glad to be useful. You see I take so much interest in Vana. We are both orphans, and both alone in the world."

"You will be a great lady!" he had heard all about the fortune Miss Deborah meant for Fenella's wedding present now, "and Vana and I shall be very humble folks. I shouldn't be surprised, Fen, if you ended life as a duchess. I am sure you are beautiful enough."

"Don't pay compliments," said Fenella, smiling, and yet with a tinge of sadness in her tone, "I am not nearly so beautiful as your Vana. I wonder you don't say she is lovely enough for a princess."

A troubled look crossed Basil's face; the words had recalled to him how very little he had to offer his darling compared with the triumphs her beauty would win for her in London.

"Vana is a dear little thing," he said, slowly, "and not ambitious. I know she will be true to me."

"I am sure of it," agreed Fenella; "but still you know she is quite under her uncle's power, so for your sake I will hope no grand suitor may come riding up."

"Vana would never listen to him."

"Not willingly; but she is a gentle, fragile creature, Basil, and Mr. and Mrs. Tempest are both determined people. I should not like to see her will in contest with theirs, Basil."

He changed the subject abruptly, but she had said enough! The first doubt of his darling's truth had been suggested.

## CHAPTER IV.

VANA TEMPEST would have enjoyed herself very much at Whitby but for her eager longing to have news of her lover. As it was, the unrecognised engagement pressed on her spirits like a heavy weight, and when Aunt Hephzibah in one of her rare letters mentioned that "Mr. Lester" had gone to Ireland the poor girl's heart sank.

Her hosts were kindly, hospitable people, and having no children made much of their lonely little guest; but Mrs. Clifford, albeit, not a mother, possessed far more penetration than her cousin at the Vicarage.

In a week she had read poor Vana's secret, and knew that she was hopelessly in love. In a fortnight, by stray questions as to the Vale Lester neighbourhood and the young men who visited at the Vicar's, she had grasped another fact, namely, that the hero of Vana's love-story was no other than Sir George Lester's son and heir.

She was a good, kind-hearted woman as ever breathed, but fond of interfering, and so she made the great mistake of writing what she deemed a line of warning to Mrs. Tempest saying Vana was a remarkably pretty girl, and it might be as well to keep her out of Mr. Lester's way lest trouble should come of it.

This letter was quite a firebrand at the Vicarage. Simple and unsuspecting to a degree, Mrs. Tempest was yet quite acute enough to see a thing when put plainly before her. She might have gone on for years without finding out Vana's secret for herself, but by the light of her cousin's letter she understood a great deal that had puzzled her, and at once told her husband the audacious truth that there was "something" going on between his niece and the young heir.

Mr. Tempest was annoyed. Much of his comfort and a great many of his luxuries came to him from his intimacy with Sir George. He was in the Baronet's confidence, and knew the hopes that were centred on Basil's marrying Miss Devreux. If he had suddenly been accused of trying to blow up Lester Court with gunpowder he could not have felt much more dismay than at the suggestion his niece was attempting to frustrate Sir George's pet scheme.

"That miserable girl!" he exclaimed, angrily. "What will she do next? It is her mother's story over again. I wish we had never had anything to do with her."

He was not a heartless man, but he had his own children and their advantage to think of. Sir George was the most powerful man he knew, and he would have sacrificed Vana again and again sooner than offend him.

Mrs. Tempest took a more hopeful view. "Well, Mr. Lester's gone to Ireland, and there's a report he's more than half engaged to Miss Devreux, so I daresay Vana will soon forget all her foolish fancies."

Vana came back in September and took up her usual duties, but she felt instinctively everyone was changed to her. She had never been petted or made much of at the Vicarage. Between her and her cousins there had been always, so to say, a great gulf fixed, but it seemed to Vana she had never been made to feel herself one too many quite so plainly as in the days that followed her return from Whitby.

It was as though a watch was kept over her continually. She never had half an hour to herself, and as to getting time to walk to Haverford Moor and inquire for "Miss Brown's" letter she might as well have tried to walk to London without her aunt's finding it out.

At the Court her pupils—some of them nearly as old as their young teacher—were as troublesome and rebellious as ever, while Lady Lester never lost a chance of snubbing the poor little amateur governess.

Vana little knew whom she had to thank. Fenella Devreux was always sweet-tempered and considerate to her. They often met at

the Court, and Fenella seemed to go almost out of her way to brighten the lot of the poor little teacher. How was Vana to suspect that in the early days which followed Basil's departure his mother had said half reproachfully to Fenella,—

"If only you had been kinder to him Basil need never have gone away," and Miss Devreux with tears and blushes had confessed she had doubted Basil's affection only because she had fancied him too attentive to little Miss Tempest.

"I will never accept a divided heart," said Fenella, proudly, "and so I have given Basil ample time to choose between us."

Poor little Vana!

She felt nothing but gratitude to the bright, beautiful creature, whose lot was so different to her own. To her Fenella seemed almost like a creature from another world, and she accepted her advances gratefully.

Meanwhile, not a word was said by Fenella of the many messages entrusted to her care; and the photograph of Basil in its red plush frame stood on the little table in Fenella's sitting-room as though it had no intention of travelling further.

And Vana went on growing paler and thinner; her beautiful eyes grew to have a look of weary sadness which would have touched a stranger's heart.

Sir George, albeit, not a very considerate man, did stop the girl one day when he met her in the village and ask her if she was sure she was quite well.

And meanwhile Vana had an anxiety ever increasing. Basil had told her to write to him often, and as yet she had sent no line. He had said, "you know the address?" and she answered "yes." But how would letters sent to his club reach him while he was in Ireland?

Poor Vana had no idea whether club letters were forwarded; any way, she dare not risk it; there was nothing for it but to wait until she could get to Haverford, and find his long-looked-for letter.

If only he had been an indifferent person, Vana could have asked boldly what part of Ireland he had gone to; but the very consciousness he was all the world to her made her fearful to breathe his name.

Mr. Lester, of course, was a subject of great interest in the neighbourhood, but somehow no one even mentioned his name to Vana. Once stung into desperation by hope deferred, she asked her aunt where about Lord Kilmorna's estate was situated, and the answer chilled her to the very heart.

"It is no concern of yours! I disapprove entirely of your interest in Mr. Lester, Vana!"

A month after her return she resolved to risk all reproaches and venture to Haverford Moor, even if she had to take the children with her. By great persuasions she made her little cousins wait outside the shop, and went in alone.

She might have spared herself the journey; the old crone behind the counter declared there was no letter for "Miss Brown." Seeing the despairing look on poor Vana's face, she put a little pile of letters—three or four at the most—in the girl's hand.

"Look for yourself, missie!" she said, not unkindly; "we always put the letters 'to be called for' in this corner, and there's not one with anything like Brown on it!"

Vana confessed as much; she felt bewildered. Basil had promised faithfully to write. It was nine weeks since they had met; nearly eight since he left Vale Lester; surely, in all that time he must have sent her a few lines? only because if her silence would tell him she did not know his address, and could not write to him till he sent it!

"I will come again soon, if you don't mind," she said, wistfully. "I think there must be a letter soon."

"Come again, and welcome!" said the woman, civilly; "if you like to write down

your name and address I'll send you the letter if it comes."

But this was declined; Vana went back to Vale Lester with a strange new fear at her heart. The solemn promise she had repeated after Basil that August evening in the shrubbery rang in her ears: "We two, loving each other very dearly, do promise to be true to each other in sorrow, absence, or pain." How little she had thought of all she was to suffer so soon, so very soon.

She had a sleepless night, and came down the next morning very white and wan; but her mind was easier, for she had at last resolved on something—she would speak to Fenella Devreux; she would invoke the aid of the girl who had never shown her anything but kindness.

Intimate with all the Lesters, in special favour with Sir George and his wife, it seemed impossible that she should be ignorant of Basil's address. The opportunity was not hard to find: Miss Devreux was leaving the Court just as Vana had finished her last lesson. They walked down the drive together.

Both were young, both were strangely beautiful, each had lost her parents; but there all resemblance ceased. Fenella Devreux had everything to make life happy; Vana nothing but Basil's love. And yet the girl so rich in all worldly things was conspiring to rob the poor little step-child of fortune! There was a link between herself and Fenella which poor Vana never suspected they both loved the same man. It was Fenella Devreux who had penned that strange anonymous letter. Fenella would stand at nothing; at no sin, however black; at no deception, however cruel, so that she obtained her end, and became Basil Lester's wife.

They had walked the whole length of the avenue before Vana could bring herself to ask her question. As they passed through the lodge gates Fenella said, kindly,—

"You look tired, Miss Tempest. Won't you come in and take a cup of tea with me before you go home? Auntie is out, but we will have a cosy little kettledrum all to ourselves!"

Vana agreed, she had never been in Miss Deborah's house, but she had often met the old lady, and had no hesitation in entering the pretty little cottage.

Fenella gave an order to a servant, and then took her guest upstairs to her own sitting-room. It was furnished with almost Eastern beauty. The vivid colours which Fenella loved pervaded the whole of the little apartment; the floor was polished and covered only by Oriental rugs; the chairs and couch were draped in soft Eastern silk; almost the only English thing about was the old-fashioned fireplace, where the large logs of wood threw out a cheerful heat.

"This is my den!" said Fenella, carelessly; "do sit down while I go and take off my things!"

Left alone, Vana's eyes wandered round the pretty room; many of the knick-knacks so lavishly scattered about were curiosities from foreign lands. There was plenty to amuse and interest her, and but for that dull pain at her heart Vana would have had a pleasant time of waiting.

On the centre table stood a handsome red frame, with folding doors of plush, to conceal the likeness within. Vana's sleeve catching carelessly against this, threw it over; there was no mischief done, only in replacing it she touched by accident the hidden spring; the doors flew open and disclosed—an almost speaking photograph of Basil Lester!

With her heart almost in her mouth, the girl who loved him looked at his pictured resemblance, given not to herself but another.

No suspicions of jealousy had come to her. She trusted Basil implicitly; besides, Fenella, from her relations with Miss Deborah, was often spoken of by the young Lesters as their "cousin." A special favourite with the whole family, Fenella might have been given this

photograph by one of Basil's sisters without his even knowing it.

It was so like him, and her heart had so pined for a sight of those dear features. Vana took the frame up to look at the photograph more closely, and then, indeed, the blow came. In one corner was written in Basil's familiar hand "To my darling; a parting gift," while on the other side, in the dear, well-known characters, appeared the motto of the Lesters: "Till death do us part."

How she fastened the frame, how she sat down quietly till Fenella re-appeared she never knew. Of one thing she was resolved: she would hear the truth before she left the house; she would know whether her lover was, indeed, false as a fancy, weaker than a woman.

Fenella dispensed tea and toast with ready hospitality, not seeming to notice that though Vana drained her cup with feverish thirst she turned from the food as though it would choke her.

The opportunity Vana yearned for came.

Looking full in her face, Fenella said gently: "You are not looking well, Miss Tempest. One would almost say you had a secret trouble. Don't be angry with me for mentioning it; I don't wear my heart on my sleeve, but, goodness knows, I have sorrow enough."

"You!" exclaimed Vana; "you! beautiful, courted, and beloved; what trouble can possibly touch you, Miss Devreux?"

"Only this," and Fenella's voice softened, strangely; "I have given my whole heart away, and I doubt sometimes if my love is returned; an awful fear will come to me whether for the sake of Miss Deborah's fortune my fiancé has promised me his hand without his love."

There was enough of real pathos in her tone to touch Vana; the poor deserted girl understood that Fenella's case might be as sad as her own.

"Is it—is it Mr. Lester?"

"Yes! Basil and I have been a great deal thrown together all our lives," said Fenella, with a skillful blending of fact and fable; "you see, we two are the most probable heirs of Simon Lester's fortune; every one thinks it must come to one of us, and so it seems a pity our interests should not be united. Aunt says she will settle forty thousand pounds on me on my wedding-day, and Basil has nothing. It would please every member of the family, but I would never have listened to the plan had I not loved him with all my heart and soul."

"And you are engaged?"

"Not formally; Basil," Fenella paused, as Vana thought to choose her words, "Basil had seen so few people, I thought he might meet with some one he cared for more than me, and so I left him free. He knows if he comes back he will find me waiting; if he chooses another he will never hear a single reproach from me. Poor fellow!" she added, naively, "he would have enough to bear without, for all his family would be furious. Now, Miss Tempest, you see my trouble. With every consideration of interest, with all his family's influence enjoining him to marry me, how can I be sure he loves me?"

The other girl answered nothing. With an endurance almost stoical, she hid her wounds and never betrayed her secret; there was nothing in her manner to tell of the cruel suffering inflicted on her; the restless, nervous twitching of her fingers alone told Fenella her thrills had gone home, and she, beautiful, cruel, insolent, was yet heartless enough to persevere.

"You do not answer me, Miss Tempest. I thought I was sure of your sympathy."

"You have it," said Vana, gently. "I think great riches must be a heavy responsibility, but you are so beautiful, it seems to me that any man must love you."

Very soon after she rose to go, and then she managed to ask the question so much in her heart.

"Will Mr. Lester soon be home, Miss Devreux?"

"Basil? There is just a chance of his returning for a few days when the first three months are up, but I rather doubt it myself. You see Kilmorna is right in the west of Ireland, in Roscommon, and it is really a serious undertaking."

That night's post carried a letter and a packet both addressed to Basil Lester, Kilmorna Towers, Roscommon. Both had been watered by a girl's tears, but the wounds Vana was suffering never betrayed themselves in the few short lines she addressed to her lover. It was not in the girl's nature to reproach Basil for his falseness. How could telling him of his treachery heal her pain?

There was no beginning to her letter, but she dated it in full:—

"Vale Lester Vicarage,

"November 1, 1882.

"I write to release you from your promise, and to tell you that henceforward you are free. I have kept my word: no human creature knows of our folly save ourselves, but it is time for it to end. Your parents are quite right: I should have been wretched as your wife.

"VANA TEMPEST."

Her heart was almost broken as she wrote it. It read more like the defiant cry of an angry woman than the farewell of a loving girl. Every word of it was true. Knowing that he was at least nominally bound to another, knowing that at the very time he had breathed love vows to her he was wooing an heiress as his bride; knowing all this, Vana would have been miserable as Basil's wife.

She sealed her letter; then still with that weary pain she packed up the few presents he had given her: from the hoop of torques (never worn, poor little trinket! for fear of detection) to the lock of his hair which had been next her heart. She kept nothing back. Only when all were in the post, and Vana was walking wearily back to the Vicarage, it came on her with a shoot of pain that she must go away. She could not linger at Vale Lester to see Basil return. Her woman's pride would help her bear much, but surely she need not have the pang of listening to her false lover's wedding bells?

(To be continued.)

**SPONGES**—Sponges are among the most curious of Nature's works. As seen by us and put to the useful purpose of absorbing moisture, they may be described as the dead bodies or skeletons of zoophytes—creatures half plant half animal—which grow upon rocks in different parts of the ocean. Sponges grow to a larger size within the tropics, and are found to be more diminutive, and of a firmer texture, as we approach the Polar circles. In their general appearance they resemble many kinds of plants, but in their internal organization they differ entirely from every vegetable production; being composed of a soft flesh, intermixed with a tissue of fibres, some of which are solid, others tubular; and the whole being interwoven together into a curious and complicated network. Although sponges, in common with the greater number of zoophytes, are permanently attached to rocks and other solid bodies in the ocean, and are consequently destined to an existence as stationary as that of plants, yet such is not the condition of the earlier and more transitory stages of their development. The parent is chained to the same spot from an earlier period of its growth, and on the young the active powers of locomotion have been conferred, apparently, for the sole purpose of seeking for itself a proper habitation at some distance from the place of its birth; and when once it has made this selection, it fixes itself unalterably for the remaining term of its existence.



## WHEN SHALL WE TWO MEET AGAIN?

—:O:—

### CHAPTER XIX.

"HALF-MAST HIGH."

THE next morning Hilda Romer felt as if nothing could induce her to meet Ronald Treherne. As he had got up rather early the day before, she thought that if she were very late in coming down he would already be off with the rest of the sportsmen.

It was striking ten when she entered the dining-room, and cast an anxious glance round.

Some of the ladies were breakfasting in their own rooms, but most of the men were there, except the one she was looking for, and yet most anxious not to see.

As she took her place next Lord Davenport, and avoided Colonel Gordon, who had invited her to come and sit beside him, she noticed a scrap of a note directed in Treherne's handwriting lying by her mother's plate.

Lady Wildgrave smiled as she explained that Treherne had been obliged to go back to his work. Indeed, she looked as if it were no misfortune at all, whilst Hilda's lips trembled, and she hurriedly caught up her cup of coffee in order to hide the tears which rushed to her eyes.

He was gone, and she had parted from him in childish anger the night before, telling him that she would never speak to him again! and all because she had been mad enough to take him for an elderly man.

He had done absolutely nothing for which she could blame him, as her thoughts roamed back over the weeks that had elapsed since Wilfred was so nearly drowned, and yet she had quarrelled with him on the most trivial pretext in the world!

Would he ever forget and forgive?

The young Earl on her right tried to make himself agreeable, but Hilda was so young that her manners were not formed enough to make her capable of carrying on a cheerful conversation whilst she was perfectly engrossed with some agonising train of thought.

Therefore Lord Davenport, with a shrug of his broad shoulders, turned to his other neighbour; and Lady Wildgrave, watching this by-play with motherly eyes, decided that it was just as well that the fascinating Mr. Treherne had taken himself off so abruptly, though her husband seemed annoyed, and even Sir Thomas expressed his disappointment.

She was most heartily grateful to him for saving her son, but she had no intention of giving her daughter to a comparative stranger, who had neither position nor ancestry to boast of; and yet she did not mean to be unkind or break anyone's heart.

As far as she could tell, Mr. Treherne treated her daughter like a child; but these so-called "children" often give their hearts without waiting to be asked, and sometimes have to go drearily without them for the rest of their lives. And if such a fate came to her sweet little Hilda in her beautiful spring-tide, what would become of her in the summer and autumn of life?

"What made Treherne take himself off in such a fearful hurry?" Lord Wildgrave asked from the bottom of the table. "We were going to try Bush Wood—the best covers in the whole place—and he was looking forward to it as eagerly as any of us."

"Wilfred is the only person who has seen him," replied his wife; "but in his note he pleads 'work'—the usual excuse."

"What a good fellow he is!" exclaimed the Viscount; and Hilda gave him a swift, sympathetic glance, as if she cordially agreed with him. "In too much of a scramble to eat his breakfast, and off in no end of a hurry, and yet finding time to see our boy!"

"That's just like Treherne!" put in Colonel Gordon, readily. "He never forgets anybody who wants him!"

"Excuse me!" grumbled Sir Thomas; "I've wanted him scores of times, but it has been the hardest work to get him to come and see me at all!"

"You ask me, Sir Thomas!" called out Lord Davenport, who professed a wild admiration for his wife; "and I'll hang up my hat in your hall as soon as you like!"

"Much I should see of you, if you did. No, no. Treherne's a steady fellow—I couldn't trust you!"

"That's good, after last night!" murmured the Earl, in an aside. "Didn't you notice, Miss Romer, how the lovely, frozen, goddess thawed when she gave those half-dozen dances to Treherne?"

"Do you mean it, really, or are you joking?" she asked, breathlessly, as a pang shot through her heart.

"Honour bright—a heap of fellows were mad about it! Refused the whole lot of us—then danced with this stranger!" he added, with fine contempt.

"I don't wonder!" said Hilda, slowly; "Mr. Treherne is ever so much nicer than—than any of them!"

"Thanks; myself included, I suppose?" with an ironical bow. "Pardon—but I didn't know I was treading on your toes!"

"I don't know what you mean!" drawing up her neck, as her cheeks flushed like a peony. "I suppose it's slang for something unpleasant? We all think a great deal of Mr. Treherne because he saved my brother's life."

"You don't say so! If it had been yours, I would have sworn that he was the best fellow I ever knew!" with an expressive glance.

"Mine wouldn't have mattered half as much!" she exclaimed with indignant contempt. "People would be sorry, of course; but it would make no difference if I died!"

Lord Davenport turned and looked straight into her lovely young face. "You might as well say that it would make no difference if the sun dropped from the heavens!"

"I wonder why you talk such nonsense to me!" she said, petulantly. "Wilfred is my father's heir, and of course, boys are of more consequence than girls!"

"Are they? I didn't know it!" replied the Earl, looking much amused; but before he could say anything more there was a general move, and the sportsmen hurried off to join the keepers, who were probably tired of waiting for them.

Hilda got away from all the rest, and instead of running up to her brother as usual, flew into the garden to steady her bewildered thoughts.

What had the Earl meant by his remarks about "the frozen goddess?" She had seen Mr. Treherne dancing with and talking to Lady Dacre, but she had thought nothing of it. Being so old—so much older than his partner, there could be no harm in it; and, besides, he was not the sort of man to flirt with a married woman.

This was how she looked at it the night before; but all was changed now. He was young, of just about the same age as Lady Dacre, only three or four years between them. He might have loved her years ago before she was married, and that might be the reason why he looked so terribly sad, as if some great trouble were weighing upon him. But it was wrong—terribly wrong to love a married woman, and he was the last man she could suspect of anything wicked. No doubt it was all Lord Davenport's nonsense, she decided indignantly, just as a turn in the path brought her face to face with Cyrilla.

"I suppose all the men have gone out shooting?" she asked, after "good morning" had been exchanged.

"All but Mr. Treherne," replied Hilda, looking up into the lovely face before her with frank eyes bent on earnest scrutiny.

Was it fancy or did Lady Dacre turn suddenly pink, as she bent over a rose, and buried her face in its dew-covered blossom?

"He went back to his horrid old mine just when he ought to have stayed."

"I'm very glad he has," said Cyrilla, with a smile. "He ought not to be away from it longer than he can help."

Hilda's heart gave a bound; Lord Davenport must be mistaken; if she cared for him at all she could not be glad that he had gone away—and from that moment, attracted by Cyrilla's sweet expression, and her tender inquiries after Wilfred, she deigned to take her under her most kindly protection.

They went into the house and sat for some time with Wilfred, who was tired out by his unwonted dissipation of the night before, and bitterly disappointed at Ronald's sudden departure.

"But he came to me before he went," he said, with a flash of pleasure in his blue eyes. "I was the only person who saw him to say good-bye. Wasn't it good of him?"

"Not at all," said Cyrilla, in a constrained voice. "He is very fond of you. He would not like to go without."

"And all last night he was so good to me. He never seemed to forget me except when he was dancing with you."

"Ah, that was towards the end of the evening, and I daresay he thought you were tired. But I must go now, or Lady Wildgrave will be wondering what has become of me," she went on, as she rose from her seat. "Some day I shall carry you off to stay with me at Mount-sorrel."

"I declare she's almost as nice for a woman as Ronald is for a man," exclaimed Wilfred, enthusiastically. "I should like Sir Thomas to die, and Treherne to marry her. Why are you so mum, Hilda? You don't say a word."

"I've been talking like anything. How do you like Mrs. Gifford?" turning the subject as quickly as she could. "She is pretty, isn't she?"

"I don't like her at all," said the boy, moving his hot head restlessly on the pillow. "You should have seen the look she gave Ronald when he was dancing with Lady Dacre. But, I say, you and he haven't had a row? He wouldn't send you a message though I asked him."

"Oh, Will! why did you ask him?" with crimson cheeks.

"There's nothing to make a fuss about. I only said, 'Shall I give your love to Hil?' and he said, quite sharply, 'Miss Romer said good-bye to me last night, but he drew his brows together in a frown. I hope you haven't given him any of your nonsense; after all his goodness to us it would be an awful shame,' and Wilfred looked quite grave."

"Do talk of something else," she exclaimed, petulantly. "I'm sick to death of his very name!"

Wilfred stared at her in the utmost horror as if she had spoken blasphemy, but before he could speak she was out of the room, and she never stopped till she gained her own.

She banged the door behind her, and overcame by the bitterest mortification, and a whole series of complicated feelings, stamped her foot with vehemence, crying aloud,—

"I hate him! I hate him! I wish to heaven I had never seen him!"

Later in the day when the ladies and a few of the men were sitting over five o'clock tea in the lesser drawing-room, Hilda, who looked quiet and subdued, asked Lady Dacre if she had ever seen the view from the western turret.

"Do take me, too!" exclaimed Mrs. Gifford. "I used to know this neighbourhood so well when I was about your age, and I should like of all things to catch a glimpse of our old place; it was close to Trevanion Hall."

The utterance of that long-forbidden name made several heads draw close together, and Cyrilla knew as well as if she had heard every word the sort of remarks that passed from one to the other in subdued tones.

"Mr. Trevanion was a very wicked man,"

Lady Daere, wasn't he?" Hilda asked, in a low voice.

"No; one of the best men that ever lived," Cyrilla answered, tremulously, in almost a whisper, as a beautiful light broke over her face, and her eyes shone like stars. It was such a pleasure to justify him even to this child.

"But didn't he try to kill Sir Thomas?" with a wistful look.

"No; it's wicked of people to say so. He quarrelled with him one day when he was half mad with grief, and—and—knocked him down; that was all, only a flower-pot got in the way, and my husband was hurt. Now, shall we go and see the view?" rising abruptly, with flushed cheeks.

There was a rustle of dainty dresses about the passages, and up the long flights of stairs, and presently they all arrived at the roof of the western tower with plenty of curiosity, but very little breath.

Kitty's bright eyes wandered over wooded slopes and fields of stubble, where the golden corn had been waving a few weeks ago; but the landscape had altered considerably since her childhood, and it was with difficulty she could recognise its once familiar features.

"There wasn't one cottage over there on that hill, and now there seems to be a crowd," she remarked in surprise.

"Those are the huts for Colonel Gordon's miners," explained Hilda, readily, "and just on the edge of the cliff—do you see a grey building, that's the Tower where Wilfred—oh, look! look!" she exclaimed, breathlessly, as every scrap of colour died out of her cheeks.

They gathered round her, all questioning and wondering; but Cyrilla seized her arm, and said imperatively, "what is it? Tell me, for Heaven's sake!"

"The flag! the flag!—it's half-mast high. There's been an accident. Oh! he'll be killed—killed!" and perfectly distracted with terror she flew downstairs.

"Who will be killed?" asked Kitty, in bewilderment.

"Mr. Treherne!" said Cyrilla, hoarsely, with white lips, and then she followed Hilda as fast as she could down the unfamiliar stairs, whilst Mrs. Gifford and the rest came close after them, wondering and lamenting as they came, for Ronald's handsome face and winning manners had made a deep impression on them all.

## CHAPTER XX.

### TO THE RESCUE.

LIKE a wild thing Hilda tore down the stairs, along the corridors, and across the hall, but when she reached the drawing-room door she hesitated, for Lady Wildgrave was very delicate, and she knew that bad news told too suddenly might give her a serious shock. Even in her bewilderment and fear she remembered that, for she had been taught from earliest childhood to be thoughtful for her mother and brother.

The opening of a door made her turn, and she saw Lord Wildgrave, Sir Thomas Daere, Colonel Gordon, and several others come into the hall, having deposited their guns in the gun-room.

"Oh, papa!" she began, whilst her lips trembled, and the tears rushed into her eyes. "Why, what's the matter, child? Not Wilfred?" asked Lord Wildgrave, as his thoughts flew to his boy.

"No—no—he's all right—but Mr. Treherne—the mine!" she gasped.

Gordon stepped forward, his face as white as his collar.

"Anything happened?" he said, hoarsely, whilst the veins in his forehead swelled as if they would burst.

Just at that moment a man rode up to the front door on a horse covered with foam, as if he had been ridden hard.

He held up a piece of paper. "The Colonel! the Colonel!" he shouted, in a voice hoarse

with hurry and anxiety, and down the steps went Gordon with the agility of a boy.

The scrawl was almost illegible, but he made out that a large bit of rock had fallen in and blocked the passage.

"Mr. Treherne send this?" he asked, anxiously.

"No, sir! Manager's oop inside, and we can't get a-near him."

Gordon threw up his hand with a gesture of despair.

"Don't give in," said Lord Wildgrave, kindly, though his face was grave as death; "I've ordered your horse and mine; come along to the stables; we'll mount there."

"Let me have a carriage, Wildgrave. You don't know what an interest I feel," pleaded Sir Thomas, earnestly; "I couldn't rest here."

"Just as you like," responded his host, shortly, "but you would be much better where you are."

Hilda had waited for no permission. She ordered her pony, and flew up stairs to put on her habit; but she had no sooner gained her room than there was a knock at the door, and Cyrilla stood pale and breathless on the threshold.

"For Heaven's sake let me have a horse. I could not ask your mother, and your father went off before I could catch him; but I should go mad if I stayed here."

Hilda ran to the bell and rang it.

"Of course you shall have one; Pycroft can carry a lady beautifully. But how quick could you be with your habit? I couldn't wait long," with an imploring look.

Lady Daere dressed with all possible haste, and the two started together.

Not a word passed between them, for neither could think of anything but the mad longing to get on faster.

Only once a pang shot through the girl's heart, for she had come out in such hot haste that she had never cautioned the servants not to say anything about the accident to her brother.

If he heard of it abruptly, without the slightest preparation, he would excite himself into a positive fever.

There was nothing to be done, however, for to turn back was impossible, and she tried to console herself with the hope that her father had remembered to send him a message as well as her mother.

\* \* \* \* \*

When Ronald Treherne made up his mind to fly from Castle Wildgrave it was not the fear of detection that drove him from the Viscount's hospitable roof. Gordon flattered himself that it was his persuasions, acting on the scrap of prudence that Treherne possessed, that had really influenced him at last—but he was quite mistaken.

The presence of the detective in the house had merely raised a spirit of recklessness within him, and a determination to brave the worst. But that hour of intense happiness with Cyrilla had altered all his intentions.

To dance with her, to have her, as it were, all to himself had been such exquisite joy that he knew the danger of it at once—and it was a danger that duty commanded him to flee from as from a dreadful pestilence. He knew that he was made of flesh and blood, and how could he answer for it that, under the hottest fire of temptation he would be able to keep a guard over himself, and never betray himself either by word or look?

It was for the sake of her happiness, as well as for the sake of his own sense of honour, that he went, but his heart was heavy as lead as he rode off from the Castle, feeling like Adam turned out of Paradise.

As soon as he reached Broadbent his thoughts were turned into a more prosaic channel. He rode straight to the Tower, where Weston, his servant, received him with a look of surprise.

"Glad to see you, sir; but weren't you back a day before you intended?" he asked, as he

took the horse to lead it into the stable. "Mr. Harewood called first thing this morning, but I told him I didn't expect to see you till to-morrow. Not long after that Mr. Stevens came; but I told him it was no manner of use bothering after you when you had just gone away for a day's rest."

Treherne was surprised that the sub-manager and engineer had both wanted to see him.

"Do you think it was anything important?" he asked, gravely.

"Not a bit of it, sir," contemptuously. "I fanciesay they had a difference about something as usual. There are some folk that make a fuss about anything; but I'm going to see after your breakfast, for by the look of you I can see you haven't had a bit," said the ex-coastguardsman with a nod of superior knowledge.

"You are right there," said his master, with a short laugh, "I'm as hungry as a shark!"

He went into his den, threw himself down in an arm-chair, opened several letters which had arrived by that morning's post, ate his breakfast leisurely, with a glance now and then at the *Daily Telegraph*, lighted his pipe, changed his coat, and was just going down to the mine when the Rev. Paul Verreker came with a quick step up the steep path which led from the valley up to the Tower.

"Oh, there you are, Treherne. I'm so thankful to see you!" he exclaimed joyfully. "Somebody declared that you were at the Castle."

"So I was two hours ago," said Treherne, as he shook hands cordially. "What do you want with me?"

"I am afraid it will bore you horribly, but you remember Atkins who met with that accident?"

Treherne nodded.

"He's going to the hospital to-day, and we've got to move him into a kind of ambulance. Now, if this is done roughly it will be positive torture to him; but if I could find anyone who would be gentle as well as strong—"

"Of course I'll come," said Treherne, readily. "I really am not wanted here. I gave instructions to Harewood which were to last up till to-morrow, and I came back a day before the time I intended."

He sighed as he thought of the reason, then went and ordered Robin Hood to be saddled at once.

It was a relief to his mind to find something to do which would take him for the time out of himself, and in a few minutes the two friends went down the hill, at the foot of which Verreker had left his horse tied to a tree.

Atkins lived in Stanpoole, so that the ride occupied some time, and moving the invalid proved a lengthy job.

First the wife had to be consoled, for she had made up her mind that if her husband were taken from his little stuffy bedroom he was certain to die on the stairs; and then Atkins had to be reassured, for his courage was shaken as well as his nerves.

Verreker said a few prayers by the man's bedside which quieted him, and then tenderly as any woman could have done, he and Ronald lifted up the poor sufferer, one carrying the feet, the other the head—for the staircase was terribly narrow—and brought him safely to the ambulance which was waiting in the road.

There was some delay at starting, but when the clumsy vehicle was once on its way Verreker insisted upon Treherne's coming to lunch with him at the Rectory.

It was Ronald's invariable habit to refuse all hospitality from his neighbours, but having broken this rule by going to the Castle, the Tower had struck him with such a sense of loneliness that he felt loth to go back to it.

A kind of presentiment came over him in the afternoon, and he felt in a sudden hurry to get to the mine. Verreker wanted to keep him to smoke a pipe after luncheon and to



finish an argument, but he shook his head and resolutely defied temptation.

On the way Robin Hood cast a shoe, as if on purpose to delay him, and he was obliged to walk the horse to a blacksmith and wait for him to be re-shod.

All the while his eagerness to get to the mine was growing more rampant within him, though he told himself that there was no reason for anxiety as Harewood was a man to be trusted.

There was only one point on which they had ever disagreed—and that was about continuing a shaft in a northerly direction, where there were large masses of rock embedded in loose soil.

Treherne considered it unsafe, and gave strict orders that the tunnel should be abandoned, in spite of Harewood's confident assertion that the richest output would come from it, and that the danger was all imaginary.

A silver-lead mine does not blacken and disfigure a landscape like a coal-mine. As the metal lies near the surface, the out-put begins almost as soon as the first adit is made, and as it lies in heaps at the mouth of the tunnel it glitters like silver itself in the sun. Of course it is not left there for long together, for as soon as a sufficient amount has been thrown out it has to be sifted and separated from all other substances and then carted off. Shafts are not sunk as in coal-mines, but long passages are cut in the side of a hill, these are called adits, and there is not the same danger from noxious gases or foul air; only occasional accidents occur from the fall of a block of rock which suddenly gives way, and blocks up a passage, entombing the unfortunate miners who happen to be working further down the adit.

As Treherne came in sight of the hill he noticed several men standing about with pipes in their mouths and their hands in their pockets, doing nothing with an air of ostentation as if proud of the performance.

Mr. Stevens, the engineer, a man with reddish hair, and a small intelligent face, called out,—

"Good-afternoon, Mr. Treherne. I'm very glad to see you."

"Why, what's up?" exclaimed Ronald, his quick eye taking in the scene at a glance. "Why have these men knocked off so early? Has the mine been closed against my orders?"

"Fact is," coming close up to Treherne, "they funk working in the North adit, and I don't altogether blame them, though Harewood will have it that it's as safe as a church."

"I don't care a rap what Harewood thinks about the matter. The Colonel and I are quite agreed that if there is the smallest risk to the men that adit shan't be worked. Harewood knows that as well as I do."

"Very odd," said Stevens. "Then you didn't tell him to set to work on it to-day?"

"Of course I didn't. You don't mean to say that he has?" his eyes blazing.

"He has; and several of the men are working there now."

"Good heavens! Send Harewood to me at once. But no, I'll get the poor fellows out first," jumping off his horse, and tying it to a tree. "I should never forgive myself if any thing happened to them."

"You won't go! Mr. Treherne, pray don't. Let me send one of the men, or, stop a minute, let me go instead," said the engineer, anxiously.

"Thanks. Do you think I funk going to any place where the men have been sent in my name? Give an eye to Robin Hood. If I'm any time, send him up to the Tower."

For one instant Treherne stood still, with a dreamy expression on his handsome face, as he gave one last glance at the shining sea, the slope crowned with Hilda's roses, the tall straight pines, the deep blue sky, the golden sunshine, then turned swiftly and entered the chill dark adit.

"What a fool I am!" exclaimed Stevens, giving himself a shake. "Why, should any thing happen because that man has gone in? And yet I half wish I had gone with him!"

## CHAPTER XXI.

### IS IT TOO LATE?

"What did th' manager say?" asked one of the men, detaching himself from the group, and acting as their spokesman, as was evident from the interested way in which they all waited for the engineer's answer.

"He says he won't have the men work where it isn't safe; and he has gone himself to call them off," said Mr. Stevens.

"That shows he's the right sort," said Brown, taking his pipe out of his mouth. "We'll give 'im a cheer when he comes on!"

"Mr. Stevens, you're wanted, sir. South adit," said a small boy with sharp eyes.

The engineer, who was accustomed to such messages whenever the smallest difficulty as to the actual working arose, went off at once, but first told the boy to lead Robin Hood carefully to the Tower.

The men dispersed to have their tea with their families before they were set to work in any other direction.

It was a rare bit of luck to have this spare time, and they determined to make the most of it.

One was tossing his baby in the air whilst his wife was pouring out a cup of steaming tea; another was giving his "missus" a good scolding for having the tiny room which served for kitchen and parlour choked up with a week's washing; another was chuckling over his little three-year-old's attempts at jumping over a skipping-rope, when a man was seen to dash past, shouting as he went something about Treherne.

In an instant the baby was put down, the scolding was forgotten, the child with the skipping-rope pushed aside.

There was no need for words, only a hasty catching up of tools, and a rush for the mouth of the mine.

Stevens and Harewood were both there, with dust on their coats and beards, for they had both been down the north adit at the risk of their own lives to ascertain what had happened.

Now, with a blanched face and nerves all astrung, Harewood was giving contradictory orders to the men who crowded up from every direction; whilst Stevens, who was much calmer, and seemed to have all his wits about him, made some sensible suggestions which were acted on at once.

By his own researches he had discovered that the casualty which he had persistently predicted had really occurred—a huge block of rock had fallen right across the north adit, and made it impossible for those inside to escape.

There was positively no possible hope of egress except by the way which was blocked, unless a fresh passage was opened through the hill-side; and there seemed to be little likelihood that those who were entombed in an airless grave would be able to last out till then.

By Mr. Stevens's orders the men took their tools, and began to work at once amongst the golden gorse.

The line which they were taking would reach the adit from a lateral direction, as, if they worked in a perpendicular line, they would run a great risk of crushing those whom they were trying to save.

Of course, the distance was longer from the side, and the task seemed nearly hopeless.

The men worked with a will, urged on by the relations of those who were entombed.

These poor women—wives, sisters, or mothers—stood around wringing their hands, and uttering the most heartrending lamentations.

All other work was suspended in the mine,

and crowds of men stood about with crowbars, pick-axes or spades in their hands, ready to take their turn when the others were exhausted, their bronzed faces showing traces of unwonted anxiety; their tongues tied by the common fear.

This was the state of things when there was a movement in the crowd, as Colonel Gordon galloped up at Dutch Girl's top-most speed, followed by Lord Wildgrave, Gifford, and some others. One look at the Colonel's face told to every one what he had been suffering. But he kept his composure by the strength of his iron will, as he jumped off his mare, and Mr. Stevens came forward to give his report; whilst Mr. Harewood hung back, unable to meet the chief manager's stern look of inquiry.

His time of reckoning would come sooner or later; but the shame and the punishment would be infinitely less if no one died through his want of judgment.

"There's not a chance of reaching them like that!" Gordon said, gruffly. "They are stifling for want of a breath of air, and whilst you are digging they will choke like rats in a hole!"

"Is there anything else to be done?" asked Lord Wildgrave, whilst Captain Gifford and the others eagerly gathered round to hear the answer.

"Dynamite!" said the Colonel, laconically.

"But my dear fellow, you'll blow them up for a certainty!"

"No, no! only a small quantity, just sufficient to break the rock. Don't you see that is our only chance?" raising his miserable eyes to the Viscount's sympathetic face.

"It is a desperate one!"

"I know, but the case is as desperate as it can be!" and he hurried off.

Lord Wildgrave shook his head mournfully, and the next moment his daughter rode up with Lady Dacre.

"Oh, papa, tell me!" began Hilda, breathlessly; whilst Cyrilla looked at him with a piteous entreaty in her eyes.

Very shortly and simply Lord Wildgrave explained the position, and the desperate remedy that the Colonel was going to employ.

"But won't that be very dangerous?" Hilda asked, in an awe-struck tone.

"Rather; but you had better get off your horses, as the noise will upset them."

Hilda sprang off, and picking up the short skirt of her habit, asked if she could help to dig. Her father did not hear her, so she caught up a spade and ran with fleet steps to join the band who were still working with all their might.

"There's a good plucked 'un!" one miner remarked to the other; "but 'oot of the way, my lass," he added, in kindly caution.

Lord Wildgrave darted up to her and dragged her back.

"For Heaven's sake keep out of the way!" he said, quickly, as he hurried her to Cyrilla's side, in the background. "We don't know how far the explosion will go!"

"But why is it worse for me than the men?" she asked, fearlessly.

"They are all moving off!"

"Yes; and throwing down their tools. Oh, they are cowards to stop!" she cried, in an agony of impatience.

"Hush, child, they would be fools to stay."

"Who's going to do it?" she asked, in a whisper, for her voice seemed to have gone.

"Gordon, he would not let anyone else. See, there he is, holding the fuse in his hand. Heaven protect him!" he added, hoarsely, as his child clung to his arm.

She was shaking from head to foot, and biting her white lips to keep back her sobs; but she was struggling hard to keep her self-control in order not to worry her father.

Cyrilla was standing close by her, her hands locked, her lips pressed tightly together. She might have been a statue but for the quick, sharp breath she drew, as Colonel Gordon, with an expression of desperate resolution on

his manly face, disappeared into the dark mouth of the central adit.

"I'm afraid you will be awfully tired," said Lord Davenport, looking round as if he expected to find an arm-chair close at hand.

"Tired!" as if she had time to think of that, when the next few minutes would decide the question of life or death for so many!

Once her eyes wandered to the group of women sobbing so bitterly. They had husbands, brothers, lovers, perhaps, down there in that living grave, whilst she—she only had a friend—a friend who could never be more than half a friend again.

"I can't think why you went off without me?" said a querulous voice behind her, and, without looking round, she knew that her husband had come to watch what might be the last act of the drama. Ah! if any one told him now that it was Ralph Treverne down there in that death-trap would he stretch a finger to help or to save him? "Tell me what's happening. I don't understand it a bit," he said, irritably.

She felt as if she could scarcely force herself to speak, but in a few words she explained the situation as briefly as possible.

"Bless my soul!" he exclaimed. "Is the fellow mad? Does he mean to rob Treverne of his only chance of living? I must go and expostulate with him."

"No, no, stay!" and Cyrilla laid her hand on his coat-sleeve.

He shook her off impatiently, and stepped forward, partly out of a real sympathy for Treverne, but principally out of an officious wish to interfere in any and everybody else's business.

But he had only taken a few steps when a noise like a thunderclap broke the stillness, and brought him to a standstill.

Women screamed, horses neighed, birds chirruping wildly fluttered from tree to tree, whilst clumps of earth and tufts of gorse were sent flying into the air.

Then there was a general rush to the mouth of the adit; but when a few had already entered it there was a second explosion, which made them come back tumbling over each other in their haste to get out.

A minute or two was spent in anxious waiting, and then, pick-axe in hand, the men rushed forward once again.

Lord Wildgrave and all those who had come with him from the Castle either went into the adit or waited at its mouth. Hilda caught hold of Lady Daore's hand, and together they hung on the edge of the crowd, waiting breathlessly for the result.

Presently some news was gathered from those in the adit, and passed eagerly from the men in front to those behind.

The rock had been broken, but there was not enough dynamite to smash it. If more had been used the whole place would have been blown up, and the entombed miners as well.

As it was there was a small aperture through which one or two had spoken.

"Was it my man? Oh! for the love o' heaven, was it my man?" cried a poor woman, with a pretty girly face, from the outskirts of the crowd.

"Was it my Bill—my bonny Bill—that niver fashed his mither wi' an unkind word since he lay like a wee cherub in his cradle?" cried a weary-looking woman, with a thin, pale face, and a blue cotton handkerchief tied over her greyish hair.

Cyrilla's heart ached for them all, for their agonised questions met with no answer. Hilda's little hand was laid on a miner's sun-burnt arm, and her white face upturned to his in earnest appeal.

"No news of Mr. Treverne?" she asked, hoarsely.

"Not yet, little miss," said the man, softening his rough voice as much as he could, for as he said afterwards to his "missus," he felt as if he were speaking to "an angel from oop above." "There'll be such a cheer as 'ull make th' echoes burst when the manager's known to be safe."

There was a sound of buzzing voices, a shout that grew and gathered volume as it rose, a sudden moving to and fro of the crowd, and the weary woman fought her way through the throng with all the strength of a mother's love, for she caught sight of her Bill, standing with dazed eyes and a strange look upon his face, at the mouth of the tunnel.

"My Bill! my Bill!" she cried, with a sort of a laughing sob, as she flung her arms round him, and hung upon him in wild joy, for had he not come back to her from the very jaws of death?

The others followed: Tom and Charlie, George, Giles, Jim, and Christopher, the six men who had obeyed Mr. Harewood's ill-advised order; but where was the one who had gone to call them away?

A sudden silence fell upon that seething throng. The women stayed their sobs of joy, the men's tongues were still, whilst every eye was fixed upon Colonel Gordon and Lord Wildgrave and the man they were carrying between them.

The crowd fell back as if by common consent till a clear pathway was made to the spot where Cyrilla and Hilda were standing side by side.

They laid him on the grass at Lady Daore's feet, his face as white as his hair, his features set as with the stamp of death, and with a cry of unutterable anguish, she stretched out her arms and sank on her knees beside him!

(To be continued.)

THE French were behind us in the matter of newspapers. Their first appeared nine years after the first was published in Britain.

True modesty is ashamed to do anything that is repugnant to reason; false modesty is ashamed to do anything that is opposite to the humour of those with whom the party converses. True modesty avoids everything that is criminal, false modesty everything that is unfashionable. The latter is only a general, undetermined instinct—the former is that instinct limited and circumscribed by the rules of prudence.

SYMPATHY.—Of all the pleasures of life sympathy would seem to be one of the sweetest and purest. It unites brethren and friends in the closest bonds; it lifts burdens, soothes sorrow, multiplies joys, and promotes human brotherhood. Flowing naturally from warm and loving hearts into grateful ones, it blesses both giver and receiver. It is the living spark which kindles all sorts of benevolent enterprises, builds hospitals, schools, and churches, promotes reforms, draws men away from vice, and guides them into paths of virtue and self-respect.

YOUNG men are apt to estimate money alone as capital. One of their number who has inherited money is, they think, better equipped for the struggle of life than others. They should look into the commercial value of money and of knowledge and skill before they decide. Figures prove that of late years money has greatly decreased in value as a money-getter, while human ability has increased. That is, the income from money invested at interest has diminished, while the compensation for services rendered has become larger.

CHILDREN are the salvation of the race. They purify, they elevate, they stir, they instruct, they console, they reconcile, they gladden us. They are the ozone of human life, inspiring us with hope, rousing us to wholesome sacrifice. If, in the faults which they inherit, they show us the worst of ourselves, and so move us to a salutary repentance, they also stimulate our finer qualities. They cheat us of weary care, they preach to us, not so much by their lips as by their innocence; their questions set us to thinking, and to better purpose than the syllogisms of philosophers; their helplessness makes us tender; their loveliness surprises us into pure joy.

## EXCELLENT PRESCRIPTIONS.

Though no doctor, I have by me some excellent prescriptions, and as I charge you nothing for them, you cannot grumble at the price. We are most of us subject to fits, and I am visited with them myself. Now, then, for my prescriptions.

For a fit of passion, walk out in the open air. You may speak your mind to the wind without hurting any one, or proclaiming yourself to be a simpleton.

For a fit of idleness, count the ticks of a clock. Do this for one hour, and you will be glad to pull off your coat the next and work like a negro.

For a fit of extravagance and folly, go to the workhouse, or speak with the ragged and wretched inmates of a jail, and you will be convinced.

"Who maketh his bed must lie in it."

For a fit of ambition, go into the churchyard and read the gravestones. They will tell you the end of ambition.

For a fit of repining, look about for the halt and the blind, and visit the bed-ridden and afflicted, and they will make you ashamed of complaining of your lighter afflictions.

For a fit of despondency, look on the good things which have been given to you in this world. He who goes into his garden to look for cobwebs and spiders will find them, while he who looks for a flower may return into the house with one blooming in his button-hole.

It has been stated as a fact that the hair does grow after death. In 1854, when the parish church of Turvey was undergoing restoration, a large stone was raised which, some three hundred years before, had been placed over the remains of Lady Johanne, wife of the second Lord Mordaunt. Her remains appeared within a shroud of yellow silk, which retained its colour and firmness. Her dark auburn hair had grown so much after death as to fill up the space around, and form a mould for the head. This was the testimony of a gentleman residing at Turvey.

ACCORDING to the author of *Jottings from Jail*, "three month's hard labour," in thieves' language is "pleasantly described as getting thirteen clean shirts, one being served out in prison each week. The tread-wheel is more politely called 'the everlasting staircase,' or 'the wheel of life, or 'the vertical care-grinder.' Penal servitude is dignified with the appellation of 'serving her Majesty for nothing,' and even an attempt is made to lighten the horror of the climax of a criminal career by speaking of 'dying in a horse's night-cap'—i.e., a halter."

SUFFERINGS OF A SHY MAN.—There is no doubt that many men appear rude who are only shy; in their embarrassment they lack words to express themselves smoothly, and so give unintentional offence. To such a man as this, parties are a positive torture. Each moment his sufferings increase. His feet become feet of clay, nothing to stand on, only good to stumble with. Hands are cold, trembling, useless. There is a disagreeable feeling in the back of the neck, and a spinning sensation in the brain. Cruel are the women who laugh at a bashful man. It is the higher order of human beings whom bashfulness attacks. It is the precursor of many excellencies, like the vigil of the knight, and if it is patiently and bravely borne the knight is thrice a hero. It is this recollection which can alone sustain the bashful man under his sufferings. Very shy men have often become very attractive men of society. The first refuge, though, of the bashful of either sex is repellant—they assume an air of hauteur. It is a natural fence, a convenient armour, and many a man and many a woman has fought her battle behind it through life. No doubt it has been the armour of many a so-called cold person.



## POOR LADY BARBARA.

## CHAPTER IX.—(continued.)

"You needn't cry out as if you wanted the whole house to hear," reproved the old nurse, much annoyed. "Anyhow, that's what Lady Mona told me. She said the wedding was up in London, and she was a witness. I'm positive of that. I remember I was so surprised I thought at first her mind was rambling; but she was sensible enough, poor dear!"

"Perhaps she told you the bridegroom's name?"

"That she didn't. She was a suspicious woman, and didn't trust her secrets to many people. She seemed a bit sorry she'd told me as much as she had; but I've kept it faithfully, even from my own children, though over and over again I've asked myself, if Lady Barbara's married, where's her husband? And then it came into my head perhaps he was a rank bad 'un, and she's just been a hiding herself all these years."

Keith shook his head.

"If the man was a fortune hunter, he would have appeared before now. He must know of his wife's wealth."

Granny declined to answer this argument, and resumed her story.

"Well, sir, Lady Mona died, and took her secret with her. The estate and everything else went to her sister; and it wasn't till many a year afterwards—this last Christmas, in fact—that I understood why Lady Barbara's wedding had been kept so quiet, and why it was she lived up there at the Grange in her maiden name."

"And why is it? I can't make out even."

"I heard the vicar a-talking to a friend about my lord's will. The gentleman was a stranger from London, and Parson Martin was telling him about Lady Barbara and her queer ways, and I sat there in the sun a-listening, though they thought I was dozing over my knitting."

"Perhaps the lady's married, and keeps herself shut up to be hidden from some ne'er-do-well of a husband," says the stranger, as proud as if he thought he knew all about it.

"You never made a bigger mistake," says Parson Martin, crossly. "The old Earl made his will many a year before he died, and he left his estates first to Lady Mona, and then to Lady Barbara, provided they were unmarried at the time of his death, or could prove he'd been present at their wedding. It was a funny way of putting it, since it left them free to marry a chimney-sweep or boot-black the moment he was dead."

"Well, sir," went on Granny as soon as she had got breath. "I thought and thought over the parson's words, and, being a bit of a scholar, I soon put two and two together."

"You must be a wonderful woman, Mrs. Ashton," said Keith, admiringly, "for I can make nothing of it. What did you think of it?"

"Well, sir, it seemed to me that what Lady Mona told me wasn't the nonsense people do talk sometimes in fever, but just the truth. Lady Barbara had a husband, and so she couldn't be the right mistress of the Grange. She'd just got to take her choice when her sister died—just to give up every penny, or to keep her secret; and I for one don't blame her that she stuck to the money."

"But she can't have hidden a husband up at the Grange all these years," persisted Keith, much amazed at the old woman's shrewdness.

Granny looked at him with mild contempt. "You don't understand everything, sir. Why, it's all clear to me. The man was dead 'fore ever she came back to the Grange. But dead or living, by having been her husband he kept her out of the property. I guess Mrs. Lenard knows all this, the serpent, and she keeps the poor soul under her thumb by threats of prison and such-like. Maybe

Mehalah Jinks knows of it, too, but I'm not so sure of that. Anyway, she's a wretch!"

"Mrs. Ashton, you have a wonderful head; but, oh, why didn't you tell this story to Mr. Bruce eleven years ago?"

"Don't you see, young master, I never understood it properly till I heard Parson Martin and the stranger a-talking last Christmas. Besides," she added, slowly, "I was kind o' fond of Lady Bab; and then, you see, I'd promised. It's all Parson Martin's fault," she concluded, crossly. "What's the use of a parson if he can't tell a body the right thing to do? It would serve him right if he married that serpent with the green eyes!"

Keith declined to discuss the vicar's offences, and brought Mrs. Ashton back to the point.

"Do you remember where Lady Barbara was married?"

"I never heard; but I saw her once with a big map of London, looking at it as if she couldn't look enough. And then she asked Patty Wood, who was a kind of maid or companion, just to find St. Clement's Church for her; and Patty said it was in the Strand, and would do nicely. So, maybe, if there really is a church called like that in London, you'll find it was there your Aunt Barbara was married, and I don't suppose it was quite a year before the Earl died, more like ten months."

"Mrs. Ashton," cried Keith, suddenly, "what became of Patty Wood?"

"I don't know. Why?"

"Could she be Mrs. Lenard? People do alter wonderfully sometimes," he said, smiling; "as you saw just now when I had these on," pointing to the wig and other hairy adornments of Mr. Higgins.

"I shouldn't be surprised," said Granny, oracularly. "I know Mrs. Lenard avoids me like cold poison; but when I have seen her, it's always struck me I had known her somewhere long ago."

"And the secret room?" asked Keith, coming back to the old woman's second confidence. "Can you tell me where it is? Not, of course, that it is of the same importance now."

Granny looked at him sternly.

"You're no true boy of Lady Diana's if you think more of getting the Grange for yourself than of saving your aunt from that serpent!"

"I don't," said Mr. Norman, gravely. "I shall never touch a penny of the Sudley property. But don't you see, the fact that it is no longer Aunt Barbara's will at least free her from her tormentors? I shall write to Mr. Bruce, and he will come down and take possession of the property in the name of the heir at law."

"And who's that?"

"Miss Keith, the young lady you saw with me the first day I came to Sudley," replied Mr. Norman, quite forgetting that Joan was probably Blanche's elder sister. "My cousin is an orphan; and Mr. Bruce, in claiming her rights for her, will rescue Lady Barbara from Mrs. Lenard."

"But that'll take time," said Granny, slowly, and in rather a troubled voice, "and from all I hear, I think there's no time to lose. Why can't you rescue her this very night?"

"How?"

"You told me Lady Bab was in the pink room."

"Yes."

"Now, are you 'certain sure' of it?"

Guessing "certain sure," was the strongest protestation in the old woman's vocabulary. Keith professed himself "certain sure" at once, adding simply,—

"I know she was there; but she had been removed, and where I have no idea."

"But I have!" said Mrs. Ashton, emphatically. "The secret room is underneath the pink room. That's the only way to it!"

"Nurse!"

His very blood had run cold at the possibility her words had conjured up. Why, the very moaning Blanche had heard might have been poor Lady Barbara's lament at being

removed to that fatal dungeon! Strong man as he was Keith shivered with very horror.

"I reckon you think as I do?" said Mrs. Ashton.

"Yes," replied Keith, concisely.

"You believe she's there?"

"I do."

"Then how are you going to get her out?"

"I must apply for a magistrate's warrant to search the Grange."

"Rubbish!"

"But I can't get in without it."

"Not by daylight."

"And how should I find my way in the dark?" asked Keith, sharply, for Granny's objections worried him, and he could not quite forgive her for keeping her secret so long. "Remember, I am an utter stranger to the house."

"There's a private staircase leads straight to the west wing. I suppose, being a lawyer, you'd not mind breaking a few panes of glass in case the window's bolted?"

Granny's faith in the powers of the law was evidently unbounded.

"I'd break every window in the Grange if necessary!" said Keith, promptly. "I think I could even pick a few locks in so good a cause."

"Then I'll go with you," said the old woman, patronizingly, as though her company must remove all difficulties. "I shall tell my daughter I feel mortal bad, and get to bed; then, as soon as the clock goes nine, I'll get up and meet you, and it wouldn't be a bad thing to take that agent man with us, he's as sharp as a ferret."

"Shall we have to get in by the lodge-gate?"

"Ay, but the keys are in the inside, and you can climb over and unlock it, as you did before. My son John told me all about it. Well, I expect I'll have a bad bout of rheumatism when it's all over, but, after all, I can stand that for the family; I nursed them all, and love 'em all, though Lady Bab never came up to the others."

Mrs. Ashton declined further refreshment, and departed, leaving Mr. Norman in a state of complete exultation; but in the afternoon his spirits had a fall. About four o'clock the phaeton from the Grange passed through the village, and Blanche, sitting sad and troubled by Mrs. Lenard's side, wore a plain white handkerchief round her throat.

It was the danger signal he himself had chosen. Mrs. Ashton's confidence had not come a day too soon. It was with the utmost difficulty Keith could restrain his impatience and wait the hour fixed upon by his ancient fellow-conspirator.

## CHAPTER X.

It was the last day of Bob Disney's holiday. The morrow would see him back at Foxleigh, prescribing for a hospital full of patients, keeping the peace between officials and nurses, doing his utmost to lessen suffering, carrying out the physician's orders with such minute care that the more discerning of them predicted that young Disney had the real stuff in him, and would some day make himself a name in the medical world.

But though Bob loved his profession dearly, though he was attached to the very walls of St. Ursula's, and had the friendliest relations with doctors, nurses, and patients, he was strangely reluctant to return to Foxleigh. Usually, though he enjoyed his annual holiday, by the time it was over he was longing to be back at work again; but this time he felt as if he would thankfully have accepted an extension of his leave of absence, since in returning to St. Ursula he put more than fifty miles between himself and Joan.

He had never meant to marry. He believed firmly a doctor was best as a bachelor. Young ladies wanted so many things: maids, jewels, and parties, and he was still a poor man.

When he went to hear Lord Landale's will,

he would have said there was no one in England so unlikely to marry as himself. If he ever had contemplated a wife (which he had not) he would have thought of some sensible, useful woman, with no thought beyond her own home; no acquaintance with art, or beauty, fashion or rank; and here he was, not a month later, hopelessly in love—over head and ears in love, and with the very most unsuitable person, according to his former views, that he possibly could have chosen: an Earl's daughter (such she had been all her life), brought up in luxury, who had had from childhood no wish ungratified—a girl who had seen all that was worth seeing in every European capital, who had reigned over a nobleman's house, and had a French maid to do her bidding—a creature on whom, till now, no shadow of sorrow had fallen, to whom privations, economies, and small means were things utterly unheard of: and this was the bright particular star on whom he had fixed his every hope, he, the hard-working resident surgeon of St. Ursula's, whose sole means were represented by three furnished rooms under the hospital roof and two hundred a-year, and who, moreover, thought himself very fortunate to get even that, and saw no chance of advancement for years.

It was utter folly, he told himself again and again. He had much better cut his holiday short, return to Foxleigh, and strive to forget Joan's image in hard work. He was quite sure this was the wisest course, but though he knew the right thing he did not do it. He remained in London to the last possible moment; he saw Joan every day, and instead of trying to forget her, he spent every leisure minute in wondering whether it would be possible for such a vision of beauty to be happy in the three rather gloomy rooms which the committee of St. Ursula's allotted to their resident surgeon.

It was on the very afternoon that poor Keith received the shock of seeing Blanche wearing his "danger signal" that Robert Disney called to say "good-bye" at Rochester House.

Miss Bruce was not in. She had gone over to her own home to arrange a few little matters; but the lawyer's housekeeper, noticing the similarity between the young doctor's name and Lady Joan's (to the servants she would be "Lady Joan" until the conclusion of the case against her) put him down as her cousin, and so ushered him, as a matter of course, into the drawing-room, where the orphan sat alone.

"You will put me down as a bad shilling, if I turn up so persistently," said poor Bob, taking a chair near her, "but you will be free of me after to-day, for I must be at St. Ursula's by twelve o'clock to-morrow."

Joan must have known before that Mr. Disney was only a visitor in London, but she had well-nigh forgotten it in these frequent meetings. It came on her with a pang how she should miss his honest face and true-hearted sympathy.

"Are you really going to-morrow? Shall you be away long? you must make haste back!"

"It will be twelve months before I get another holiday!" said Bob, dejectedly; "I daresay, Joan, you will have left Rochester House by then?"

Joan played nervously with her fingers.

"We shall miss you very much!"

"I am only a big, blundering sort of fellow," said poor Bob, dolefully; "but I should have liked to be able to stay near you till things were settled. Of course, I know Edgar will lose the case—and he deserves to. What jury would believe you began a career of fraud at five years old? But if you win the case, you will be very lonely."

"I shall be lonely all my life!" said Joan, simply; "but if I win the case I shall be free to map out my future; there will be no cloud on my past. I can go out into the world as Dorothy Browne without a stain upon my name, and get my own living honestly."

"Absurd idea!" said Bob, crossly; "I shall feel ashamed of Bruce if he lets you do anything of the kind. He told me he wanted you to stay here; he looked on this as your home."

"Dear old man!" said Joan, smiling; "but you see, Mr. Disney, I am rather proud! Lord Laudale would think it presumptuous of anyone called Browne to have pride, perhaps; but all the same, I have a little, and I could not live on charity, not even Mr. Bruce's!"

"It isn't charity! He has five hundred a year!"

"For a special purpose, and that purpose does not concern Dorothy Browne! No, Mr. Disney, don't throw cold water on my plans. I have made up my mind to be independent!"

"It's absurd!" said Bob, decidedly. He was much more at ease now they had got on to a subject he could speak freely about. "You know perfectly well you are not in the least fitted for hardships. Bruce ought to make you have sense!"

"I haven't told him yet," said Joan, rather disappointed. "I thought I would win you over to my side first, and then you would persuade him."

"Never!"

"You have always said work is honest and honourable; you told me yourself some of the nurses at St. Ursula lead the most noble lives of any women you had ever met."

"Well, they do!" admitted Bob, reluctantly; "they relieve suffering and soothe the way to the grave. But that's very different to your undertaking to teach a tribe of unruly children, or actually going out as a companion, to be tyrannized over by some ugly woman, just because she happens to be richer than you."

Joan absolutely laughed.

"I never dreamed of being a governess! I don't think I have any taste for reading, and would any lady engage a companion who had figured in a law court? Oh, no! I had mapped out a very different future for myself, and I hoped you would help me; I felt sure of your approval."

"I shall never approve of your making yourself into a slave. What did you think of doing, pray?"

"I wanted to be a nurse."

"You!"

"I never aimed anything in my life!" persisted Joan, "and I am very strong. I think I should make a good nurse because I get on with sick people, and having no relations, I should never want holidays!"

"Rubbish!"

"I wrote—at least I got Miss Bruce to—to St. Ursula's the other day for the rules, and I find they are open to receive able-bodied young women under twenty-three as probationers, without any payment on either side. I could do very well without any salary for twelve months, and I daresay after the first year I should earn something."

"I think you must be crazy!" said Bob, crossly; "you have no idea of the life you are contemplating. It would be like harnessing a butterfly to the plough to put you to such work!"

Joan's eyes filled with tears.

"You need not have called me that!" she said, reproachfully. "I know I am not a heroine, and I have never done anything useful; but when papa was alive my work seemed to be to make him happy."

"Don't cry!" said Bob, penitently; "I am a brute to vex you. But the fact is, I like butterflies; they seem to me to do a lot of good flitting about in the sunshine. I didn't mean that you were useless by what I said; but I do maintain it would be folly for you to become a nurse."

"You think I am not good enough!"

"Don't put reasons into my mouth, please!" retorted Bob, all his irritability returning. "I think—and so would every other sensible person—that all the medical students and most of the younger doctors would be hopelessly in love with you in a week, and St.

Ursula's is not the place for that sort of thing!"

"It is you who are talking nonsense now!" retorted Joan, brightly. "Do you really think so badly of your fellow-practitioners as to fancy they would forget their duty?"

"I don't see that falling in love is exactly forgetting one's duty," said Bob, in an aggrieved tone. "No man would do it on purpose. One takes the complaint involuntarily, like measles or small-pox, only it's much worse."

"Well," persisted Joan, "if I promise you beforehand not even to speak to one of your friends unnecessarily, if I assure you I have no idea of captivating one of them, will you recommend me to the Sister Superior of St. Ursula's?"

"No, I won't!"

"Then you are very unkind."

Bob nodded in his chair.

"I know one of the committee of one of the London hospitals; I'll recommend you there if your heart is really set on it, but I call it madness."

"But why not St. Ursula's?"

"You must know perfectly."

"Indeed, I don't, unless you think your patients too sacred to be practised on by an inexperienced nurse; but it can't be that, because I know St. Ursula's has probationers."

"Well, if you're offended remember it's your own fault, Joan. You made me speak out."

"I shall not be offended."

"Well, then, I don't think I'm a coward. I believe I could bear sorrow and disappointment as well as other men, but I don't see why I should voluntarily inflict them on myself."

"You are speaking Greek to me," protested Joan. "Why should my coming to St. Ursula's cause you sorrow and disappointment?"

"Because I don't believe you would be there three months without marrying somebody, and as I happen to love you better than anything in the world, I don't see why your courtship should be carried on under my very eyes."

Blank silence. Joan, with very red cheeks, was looking steadily into the fire. Mr. Disney fancied from her silence she was hopelessly offended.

"I expect you'll never forgive me," he said, ruefully; "but you know it is all your own fault. You would make me speak out. After all, I haven't injured you. It can't hurt you when you make some splendid match, that in an obscure country town a poverty-stricken surgeon worships you as the one love of his heart. I know I've not a chance. I've known it all along, and if I hadn't been a simpleton, I should have gone back to Foxleigh days ago, when I first discovered the pit I was falling into."

Joan faced round suddenly, and their eyes met. There were large tears in hers.

"I think it's very unkind of you to call me a pit."

"Well, you know," said Bob, half apologetically, "it's rather hard on a fellow to know he's lost his heart to a girl he's without the slightest chance of winning. I'm fond of my work, and I like Foxleigh. I'm poor enough, but I was quite contented till I met you. Now, all my life I shall be haunted with the thought of what might have been if I'd been richer; and as though that wasn't enough, you propose to come down to the hospital and inflict the sight of your courtship on me."

"I don't think, Mr. Disney, I have ever done anything to make you deem me mercenary, and yet you have clearly decided I mean to marry for money. It's very unfair of you."

"Just think what you've been used to," explained Bob, ticking the items off on his fingers as he enumerated them: "Jewels, horses, carriages, footmen, French maids, balls, theatres and perpetual travel. Wouldn't



it be wicked to expect you to tie yourself for life to a poor man?"

"I have had all those things," agreed Joan, looking at him with an April face, "and I have lost them. I shouldn't care to have one of them; back again, but there is something else passed from my life more precious—love. If ever I marry, Mr. Disney, it will not be to secure wealth or rank, pleasure or amusement, but just the one thing I cannot be happy without—love."

Bob looked at her earnestly, eagerly.

"Don't trifle with me, Joan. It's my whole life's happiness at stake. I love you with all my heart and soul, but could you possibly live in three small rooms on such a pittance as two hundred a year?"

"Well," said Joan, "if you had been benevolent and recommended me to the Superior of St. Ursula's I rather fancy I should have had to live in one small room on twenty pounds a year with plenty of hard work thrown in."

"Joan, can you love me?"

"You never asked me," she retorted.

Presumably he asked her then, for when Mr. Bruce came home to dinner he found the two young people sitting on the drawing-room sofa, with the fire out, and utterly oblivious of the fact that it was seven o'clock.

"She has promised to be my wife," said Bob proudly to the lawyer, when Joan had departed. "You'll be on my side, won't you, sir, and get her to marry me at once? I am a great deal poorer than she ought to have expected, but I love her dearly, and I will protect her from all trouble with my best strength."

"I know you will," returned Kenneth Bruce, heartily; "but, young man, have you counted the cost? Your cousin, Lord Landale, will renounce you for ever. You'll be in disgrace with every relation you have in the world."

"I don't care a fig!" returned Bob. "My situation is safe enough. The Committee rather prefer a married man. If you will help me persuade Joan, sir, I don't see why we can't be married at once. Her home is waiting for her, and don't you see then her name would really be Disney before that odious case comes on."

But Joan absolutely refused—and Mr. Bruce thought her right—to hear of marrying before the trial was over.

There was not the shadow of a doubt the verdict would be in her favour; indeed, the greater part of the world thought the young Earl made to go on with the suit at all, but Joan had her pride, too. She would not come to Bob, dearly as she loved him, while there was the slightest chance of her bringing him a shadowed name.

Of course he was indignant at her prudences; but Mr. Bruce pointed out to him that as he had despaired that afternoon of ever winning her, three months was not too long to wait; and he did not think, in any case, Joan could have borne to wear bridal robes while her adopted father's death was still so recent.

Bob was a little pacified by these arguments, and departed for Foxleigh in the heat of spirits.

It was when he had gone, and Joan was looking a little saddened by the parting, that Mr. Bruce told her very tenderly how nearly Keith Norman's mission in Yorkshire concerned herself.

"I would not speak to you while there was so little hope of his success," said the lawyer, kindly, "but in a letter I had from Norman this morning, he told me he had found a clue. He gave no particulars, indeed, his letter is provokingly short; he merely says he is on the track, and has discovered the reason of Lady Barbara's seclusion. In a very little while, my dear, I hope you and your sister will be publicly recognized as the children of the late Lord Keith."

"In common justice Lady Barbara ought to give you each a portion out of her long accumulated savings; but even if she does nothing

for you, you will rejoice to know that you come of a family as old and noble as Lord Landale's own."

"That honest fellow who loves you would be quite contented if his wife were plain Dorothy Browne, but it will be a pleasure to you to know that no one can taunt him with making a misalliance since he marries the Honourable Miss Keith."

"And I shall have a sister, a sister of my own! Mr. Bruce, what is Blanchelike?"

"A paragon of virtue and beauty, according to Keith," said Mr. Bruce, comically. "My sober, sensible clerk has completely lost his head, and if only you and Bob will be patient I don't see why we shouldn't have a double wedding, that is if as elder sister you graciously consent to receive your cousin Keith as a brother-in-law."

"It is delightful! Oh! Mr. Bruce, why didn't you tell Bob? It seems such a shame he does not know!"

"My dear child, your lover has a victim rare enough in mankind—humility. He already thinks himself a shockingly bad match for Miss Browne, of no particular family. Pray, what would he say if he learned too suddenly his intended bride was the Honourable Dorothy Keith, grandchild of the late Lord Munro?"

"And you are quite sure?"

"Positive. We should have told you before only there were drawbacks. It seems no one but Lady Barbara could prove your parents' marriage, and Keith's mission had proved so fruitless that until this morning I almost despaired of his ever seeing her."

"And she is my aunt? Mr. Bruce, what a number of relations you are providing for me!"

His hand rested half caressingly on her golden head.

"You must be patient with her, Joan. I fear her own folly has entailed great suffering on her. You will like to know, child, that Lord Landale had a life-long friendship with Lord Munro. It is passing strange that the girl he believed to be his own daughter should be the child of the late Lord Keith!"

Joan left Mr. Bruce at Waterloo station—she had been up to town to see her lover off to Foxleigh—and started for Richmond.

After the excitement of the morning she was not disposed to settle down to a quiet afternoon of fancy work, and she had an errand at the pleasant river side town.

Her own maid had been absent on a holiday at the time of Lord Landale's death, and of course, when Joan learned her own altered prospects, she no longer wished Pauline to return.

She sent the girl's wages and a handsome present instead of warning; the answer came back from Pauline's mother that she was very ill, and Joan had already paid two or three visits to the little cottage at Richmond.

The old French woman was a clear starcher, and not very well versed in nursing, so that the young lady's visits were much appreciated both by mother and child.

Joan leant back in her corner of the carriage, full of thoughts of the happiness that had come to her. Dearly as she had loved Lord Landale, she had felt ever since she knew the secret of his life it was cruel to wish him back.

He had loved his wife with all the strength of a reserved, sensitive nature. From the moment he discovered the true name of her melody, his years must have been one long sorrow, one terrible dread lest the seeds of insanity should develop in her child.

No, though her heart ached when she remembered she should never see his face again, the girl he had cherished could not mourn for him.

Apart from that one grief her future looked fair enough. Joan had no fear of poverty; she loved Bob Disney very truly. She had had ample proofs of the disinterestedness of his affection, and now the happiness had come to

her of knowing she could take him a name as ancient as his own.

She leant back in her place with a strange peace at her heart; out of evil good had come.

Mrs. Disney's cruelty had spared her the misery of believing herself the child of a mad woman. The young Earl's cruel vindictiveness had led to her acquaintance with Bob. Indirectly she owed her happiness to her foe.

Opposite to Joan was a gentleman in deep mourning; apparently his reflections were not so pleasant, for there was a puzzled look on his face, a worried anxious expression about his mouth, as he read and re-read some closely-written papers taken from a small black bag. He stooped courteously to pick up a tiny notice that Joan had dropped, and as she thanked him their eyes met.

Edgar, Lord Landale, thought he had never before met such a lovely face. Joan wondered of whom this grave, melancholy young man reminded her. Then she discovered he was gazing at her very intently, and she blushed.

"I beg your pardon," said Lord Landale, courteously, "but I fancied I had met you before. I remember now of whom you reminded me. What strange things chance likens are."

"And how few people see the same resemblance," she smiled.

"I fear you would not be flattered if I told you of whom you reminded me, but the face made a great impression on me at the time. It was a poor little flower girl whom I met outside one of the theatres last September. She looked half starved, and she was very poorly dressed, but she had every mark of good blood. I am rather fond of physiognomy, and I made out a nice little theory that she was the child of some noble family, kidnapped by gipsies in infancy."

Joan smiled.

"I am afraid you are romantic."

"My mother says so. I don't think I am. I know I never have any sympathy with romantic actions, and I never read a novel in my life."

"Truth is stranger than fiction," said Joan, thinking of her own story; "one sees romances in real life every day."

"I hope you will never be the heroine again."

"Why? There would be no disgrace in it."

"I think there would. Ladies should be kept far remote from public gossip or scandal. In our order a woman's name is tarnished if it is even too often in people's mouths."

The strangest suspicion came to Joan. She had no reason for the conviction, but it dawned on her suddenly that this was Lord Landale, her cruel foe. His age corresponded; he was in deep mourning. Bob Disney had said his cousin was handsome and fascinating. There could be no doubt about it: she was like a little with Edgar, Earl of Landale, and he had chosen her—her of all people in the world—to confide his opinions to.

"I must tell you one thing," said Joan, brightly, for just now she had quite forgiven Edgar for Bob's sake: "before you say another word, I don't belong to 'your order'; when people speak like that they are generally aristocrats, and at the present moment I am very far removed from that exalted position."

"You don't mean it?"

"I do!" said Joan, for she would not think of herself as Miss Keith until the proofs were found. "At this moment the only relation I know of is a sister who six months ago was as poor as the flower girl you mentioned."

Lord Landale looked amazed.

"I—really—"

"I know you did not mean to be uncoarse," said Joan, frankly, "and I ought not to have spoken so freely, but there are good and true hearts in every social grade; the peerage may embrace all the fashionable world, but there are virtuous, sweet-tempered, accomplished, and even beautiful women beyond its pale."

"I am afraid you are a radical," he sighed,



[IT CAME ON JOAN WITH A PANG THAT SHE WOULD MISS BOB'S HONEST FACE!]

as though he were not quite satisfied with himself; "but you see the honour of old families, the dignity of an old name, must be kept up; any man or woman worth the name would sacrifice much to honour."

"To honour, yes!—to pride, no!" said Joan, passionately. "Pride has broken more hearts than poverty will ever do."

It was an express train, timed to stop nowhere between Richmond and C'apham Junction. It had been a very fine day in the morning, but had soon clouded over, and was decidedly foggy when Joan left Waterloo. Looking out of the window she saw the fog had increased, and was now so dense there were gas lights at the little station they had just passed.

A strange fancy seized her that trouble would come out of this journey, and then there was a strange dull noise, a fearful shaking as of two heavy bodies coming into collision, and then Joan found herself lying on the floor of the carriage, very stiff, and in great pain, but perfectly conscious. She tried to move, but the agony in her arm made her feel faint if she attempted to raise it. The lamp had gone out, so they were in perfect darkness, for the thick fog made the afternoon as impenetrable to her eye as night. She could see nothing of her companion, could not even tell how it had fared with him. There were heart-breaking cries and groans around her, but she was sure they did not come from him. Joan longed for her lover. Why did not some one come to their help? What had happened? Were they in a tunnel? Would they be left to their fate? Oh! if she could only move!

Then the door opened suddenly, and a grey-haired man holding a lantern entered and flashed the welcome light on Joan's pale face.

"What has happened?" she ventured to ask, in a faint, weary tone. "I think my arm is broken."

"It's a collision, miss," said the man, civilly enough; "goods train got off its proper line through the fog and run right into you; there's

two carriages smashed to pieces; happily, they were empty. I'll bring a doctor to see your arm directly, miss. Is this gentleman a friend of yours?"

"No! he was talking to me just before. Is he hurt?"

"He looks like death," said the man, supposing, as she had denied any relationship, he could speak frankly, "but the doctor'll soon find that out."

Half an hour later Joan, her arm in splints, her limbs shaking with agitation, went on Doctor Gray's arm to a waiting-room, where they had carried her late fellow traveller.

He was dying, the doctor told her; nothing in the world could save him, and he had taken the strangest fancy to see her before the end.

"You're in no state for such a scene, my poor child," said the old man, kindly, "but it hurts one to cross the wishes of the dying, and it's a sad case; he's the new Lord Landale, only just come to his honours; and then, too, he's the only son of his mother, and she is a widow."

Lord Landale motioned with one trembling finger for Joan to come nearer.

"I wanted to tell you," he said, speaking as though he had known her all his life, "you were quite right; dying makes one see things differently; it was pride made me do it, only pride."

Joan understood perfectly all he left unsaid; not so the surgeon, who whispered in her ear: "Poor fellow! he's wandering."

Joan bent over the dying man, once her cruel foe.

"I understand," she said, gently; "if it was all to come over again, you would be sorry for the poor girl your uncle loved, even though she was not a Disney."

"Yes; you'll find Bob, my cousin, and he'll tell her; I think she'll forgive me now."

Joan hesitated one moment. Doctor Gray had gone to look after some other sufferers, and they were quite alone.

"Lord Landale!" she said in the soft, clear

tones which her lover thought the sweetest music; "I had not meant to tell you, but I think you would rather know it: I am Dorothy Browne."

He betrayed no surprise. When we are very near the borderland of life nothing startles us very much. A smile of ineffable sweetness crossed his lips.

"Bob was right," he said, feebly. "He told me the girl my uncle loved must be worthy. You'll forgive me now?"

"Willingly!"

He opened his eyes once more—those beautiful eyes which had won many a woman's heart.

"It is growing dark," he murmured; "I wish you'd kiss me."

She pressed her lips to his, but Edgar, Earl of Landale, never had that caress; with the prayer for it his spirit fled back to the God who gave it.

(To be continued.)

In an old church at Childwall, near Liverpool, an engrossed parchment, dating back to the time of William and Mary, has been found among the archives, containing "Instructions for Sidesmen." Here they are:—

"To hear, and see, and say nowt,  
To eat, and drink, and pay nowt;  
And when the wardens drunken roam,  
Your duty is to see them home."

SAYS a New York newspaper: Girls with slender waists have taken to wearing dog collars in the place of belts. Vanity, of course, is at the back of the fad, but it is a go nevertheless. The collars vary in appearance, but most of them are of the mastiff size, and nearly all of them can be let out. Some of them looked as if they wanted to sit down and take a fresh breath, but others, who were more slender, were as easy as you please.





[DR. HADLOW'S EYES FOLLOWED NORA'S FAIRY-LIKE FIGURE AS IF FASCINATED!]

NOVELETTE.]

## HIS FIRST AND LAST LOVE.

## CHAPTER I.

"I am too weary of this long bright calm ;  
Always the same blue sky, always the sea ;  
The same blue perfect likeness of the sky,  
One rose to match the other that has waned,  
To-morrow's dawn the twin of yesterday's ;  
The waves of fireflies come and go the same,  
Making the very flash of light and stir,  
Vex one like dronings of the spinning wheel.  
Give me some change."

I was sitting in the flower-laden porch, in an easy rocking chair, a book on my lap, my feet crossed inelegantly, and my hands clasped behind my head. I was dreaming, day-dreaming, and yet alive to all that was going on around.

I could hear the "swithe-e-e, swithe-e-e," of the sickle, coming from the meadows, as wielded by strong hands it mowed down the lush grasses and the lowing of the kine as they stood knee deep in the flower-enamelled pastures waiting for the dairy maids, who were leisurely going to milk them, bantering and laughing on their way with the men, and the crowing of the barn-door cock, mingling with the grunts of big pigs and the squeaks of little ones, the stamping and neighing of horses, the incessant hum of the bees, and the "whir, whir," of many and many a gay-winged insect as they swept by.

I could hear it all, and see the bright flowers, rainbow-coloured, and sweet of scent, that made the garden, so pretty, and perfumed it with their sweetness, only I gazed at them with dreamy eyes, for my thoughts were full of Nora's coming on the morrow.

Now, Nora Hilliar was my cousin, my junior by three years by time, and almost ten by temperament, for I was quiet, staid

and sedate, she merry, bright, and thoughtless, and we had not met for three years, she having been at Paris finishing her education, while I having completed mine, and having most of the 'ologies at my finger tips, besides knowing Latin well, and speaking four languages beyond my own native English, had remained in Sussex, at Skerryvoran, with my aunts, the Misses Trotpoles, who were joint owners of the pretty, picturesque, old red brick house that was our home, and to boot, three of the nicest, dearest, sweetest, old maids that ever lived.

First there was Miss Jane, tall, thin, slightly stooped, with corkscrew ringlets each side of her face of that peculiar, ashey-grey hue that fair hair turns, and blue eyes, and a peculiarly amiable expression. Then there was Miss Anne, of middle height, stout, with a fresh complexion, and white hair, and the remains of great good looks, and lastly Miss Mary, small, slight, with straight, delicate features, black hair, banded closely to her well-shaped head, and a pair of beautiful, brown eyes, with something sad and wistful in their soft depths.

She was my godmother and my favourite. Perfectly adorable, though they were all excessively nice and kind. My mother and Nora's had been younger, twins, and married within a couple of years of each other. But while Nora's mother lived until she was ten, mine died before I was a year old, and my father dying of grief a few months later, I was taken by my aunts, and really never remembered, never knew any home, save dear old Skerryvoran.

Those were twelve happy years I spent, with them their pet and darling, the object in whom all their interests and hopes centred ; and then Nora came. Her mother died suddenly of fever in India, and Major Hilliar sent her over to England in charge of a faithful ayah, begging his sisters-in-law to take charge of her.

They accepted the charge with amiable

readiness, though I think at first they would perhaps rather not have received her. However, she soon won her way into their hearts and into mine also.

At first I thought I should be jealous of the child, who was coming to divide the love of my dear ones with me, but I was not in the least. She was such a bright, gay, kittenish creature, it was impossible not to love her, and I petted and spoiled her just as much as our aunts did.

There was a great difference between us.

I inherited from my Scotch father a certain amount of prudence and staidness, with a strong dash of that solid firmness and determination which is one of the Highlanders, chief characteristics ; while Nora from her Irish father inherited the gay *débonnaire* merri-ness of the thoughtless Celt, and was my antithesis in every respect, often doing and saying things of which I would never have dared to utter. Nevertheless, we were excellent friends for the four years she remained at Skerryvoran, and parted only with tears and regrets when she, by her father's wish at fourteen, went to a finishing school at Paris.

She was coming back, and would arrive to-morrow, and as I sat there in the rose-covered porch, I wondered for the hundredth time what she would be like, whether she fulfilled the promise of extreme beauty she gave three years before, and whether she was as gay, tormenting, winsome and thoughtless as of yore ?

The train of my ideas was interrupted by Aunt Jane who appeared in a big white apron, with signs of heat about her calm face that plainly showed she had been over the kitchen fire, for she generally superintended the cooking, and was famous at whips, creams and jellies.

"Well, child," she began, addressing me as she had always done, though I was turned twenty, "have you been improving your mind ? Do you like your book ?"

"Very much," I hastened to reply, with a little guilty flush, for I had not read more than a page of "Lives of Famous Women" that afternoon.

"That is right. You will be able to help Nora when she comes with your superior knowledge."

"She may not want helping, aunt. Her accomplishments will, I have no doubt, surpass mine."

"That is not likely. You have had a thorough solid English education, have been well-grounded in all branches; the French teach more showy things: like their cooking, it is frothy and less substantial. In fact, I do not believe in English girls going to France to finish their education. I think they do better at home. I do not believe in it at all."

"What do you not believe in, sister?" asked Aunt Anne, as she appeared in the porch, also in a big white apron, with a basket on her arm, garden gloves three sizes too large on her little fat hands, and a huge pair of scissors.

"Girls going to France to be finished, Anne."

"And I agree with you, sister," said the younger lady, with a sage nod of the head that made her two rows of corkscrew ringlets shake and quiver again. "There are priests, there, and popish people, and convents, and confessions, and many things to induce a child to go over to Rome."

"Yes, indeed, sister," sighed Aunt Jane.

"And I've heard that they eat frogs and snails, and that you can't buy a whole fowl or rabbit in the place. They're all cut up into pieces, and as for a good, wholesome joint, it's not to be had. A leg of mutton is a thing they don't understand, and it's not good for a young girl to be fed upon messes, and potages, and such-like greasy things."

"Certainly not," agreed Miss Trotpole, with an air of thorough conviction.

My aunts were dear, good creatures, but they had never been out of England, and their ideas of foreign countries were rather strange and amusing.

"Now, the dinner we shall give Dr. Peters and Dr. Hadlow to-night will be wholesome and nourishing, from fish to dessert."

"That I am sure it will, sister," cried Aunt Anne at once, for she had an immense respect for her sister's powers as a housekeeper and manager.

"I have decided not to have soup," continued Aunt Jane. "It is so very warm; I thought to begin with fish pleasant and more proper to the season."

"Certainly, sister, certainly."

"And the table I will leave to you and Mary. You are going to get the flowers now, I suppose?"

"Yes, Jane, now."

"We shall want a good supply, sister. It is not often we entertain, and we must do it thoroughly."

"Of course, and bachelors," with a slight blush, "are more particular than married men."

"How can you know, Anne?" queried Aunt Jane, almost sharply, the shadow of a frown on her amiable face.

"I—I—have heard dear Ethel (Nora's mother) say so," faltered Miss Anne, the blush deepening, and stealing up to the roots of her pretty white hair.

"Oh! Well, Helen, you had better help your aunt to gather the flowers, and then to arrange them. We must not let Mary fatigue herself. She is not strong yet. I have my tart and custards to see to and a whip. Doctor Peters likes a whip better than anything else."

"With a flavouring of vanilla, Jane. Don't forget that."

"Am I likely to, sister?" demanded Aunt Jane, with sudden sternness. "Do I ever forget any flavouring or essence any particular guest or inmate of our home like?"

"No, no. Your cooking is perfection," the younger sister hastened to assure her elder.

"Then it is needless to remind me of anything connected with it. Your province, Anne, is the garden."

"Yes, sister," agreed the other, meekly picking up her basket and scissors and stepping out into the quaint old garden, where the roses bloomed luxuriantly, and the red pinks shed their perfumes on the air, and the tiger lilies reared their colourless, graceful heads, and the geraniums made a perfect blaze of colour, and the pansies dotted the dark earth with their yellow, white, and purple blooms, and the sweet william, hollyhocks, and love-lies-bleeding grew.

I followed with another basket, and soon we had snipped off a goodly bouquet of bloomers.

"Enough now, Helen. Don't you think so?"

"Plenty, aunt. Shall we go and arrange them?"

"Perhaps we had better, and get Parsons to lay the cloth. I don't want Mary to exert herself. She will if we don't get it all finished before she wakes from her afternoon nap. The glass and china are her department, you know."

"Yes."

My aunts lived together in almost unbroken amity, only not one of them liked any encroachment on her particular "department."

Miss Jane's was the kitchen and the cookery, Miss Anne's the garden, conservatory, and the decoration of the rooms with her floral treasures; while Miss Mary superintended the glass, china, and plate, some of which was most costly and beautiful, and laid the table with the help of the ancient hand-maiden Keziah, whenever they had company.

Of course Aunt Jane, as the eldest, was mistress of the house, and always decided any momentous question, but she was rigidly particular in not interfering with her sisters' departments, and was quick to resent any interference from them, but Mary never troubled her.

She was the most intellectual of the sisters, and spent all her spare moments reading theological, historical, or geographical works. Aunt Anne, was, if I may apply the term, only it does not seem to express quite what I mean, the most frivolous and thoughtless. She had been very handsome, and I often wondered she had not married.

Aunt Jane, I knew, had been engaged to a young naval lieutenant, who, one stormy night, went down with his good ship and comrades, and was never heard of after.

So her state of single blessedness was accounted for, and my godmother never seemed to care much for men or their society, so I conjectured it was from choice she remained an "unappropriated blessing."

But Aunt Anne was different. About her costumes there was a suggestion of fashion, a suggestion that a considerable amount of time and thought had been expended on them. Her laces and neck frills were of the finest and snowiest, her boots and shoes were more shapely than her sisters', and she wore nothing on her white hair; neither a dainty little coiffure of lace such as Aunt Mary wore, nor a bonnet-like arrangement crowned with flowers and feathers similar to that Aunt Jane sported.

It always seemed to me that she regretted her lost youth, sighed for the vanished days when she was young and handsome, and clung tenaciously to anything and everything that would make her seem and feel a little younger.

However, at fifty-five it is hard for a woman to keep up the illusion of youth, and her "too—too solid flesh," moreover, was a source of grief to her.

I knew she secretly envied her slimmer sisters, and worried herself more than Mary, who was five years her junior, did about her personal appearance.

Aunt Jane was sixty-two, and made no secret of her age. Indeed, it would have been difficult to find a more sensible woman than Miss Trotpole, and yet I liked her least of all my aunts.

My godmother was a delightful companion. It was quite a treat to spend an afternoon in her particular little sanctum under the eaves, which was fitted up with bookshelves, and bore a goodly store of books, and listen to her conversation.

She was so well-read she knew a little of everything, and could always answer a question put by a young and inquiring mind; but she was careless about her dress, generally wearing a dingy old black gown, and formed a striking contrast in that respect to her second sister.

Aunt Anne used to look so pretty of a bright summer's morning, with her neat cambric gown trimmed with ribbons, shiny laces at her throat and wrists, her clear skin soft and fine as a girl's glowing with health, and her beautiful silvery hair arranged with the greatest precision in four curls at each side of her face, and a knot at the back, that I often wondered that at this late period of her existence some nice old gentleman of sixty or thereabouts did not see for her hand and heart, and take her unto himself "for better for worse, for richer for poorer, till death them did part," and make her his wife.

Men, however, about Standron were not numerous, nor feelings inclined for matrimony, and the larger portion of them were decidedly old, thinking of mere creature comforts, and possibly preparing for the next world.

Amongst the young ones there was lawyer Perkins' son, an insignificant little snob, who thought of nothing more than his boots and ties.

The Reverend Mark Mavis, a pale, attenuated, sanctimonious-looking man, with blinky eyes, a stoop, and high church views, and Doctor John Hadlow, a clever, rising young man, who came as old Doctor Peter's partner two years before, and took most of the work off his shoulders.

In the cottages and amongst the poor he was welcomed warmly. People seemed to have faith in him, to gain hope when they looked at his keen, clever, pleasant face.

There was a sense of power and comfort in his mere presence that was very sustaining to the sick and weak.

A few of the older gentlefolk clung tenaciously to Doctor Peters, seeming to prefer his old-fashioned ways to new-fangled methods of putting health in a diseased body, and amongst the number were my aunts.

"Shall you have young Doctor Hadlow, sister?" asked Miss Anne, soon after his arrival in Standron.

"Certainly not," returned Miss Jane, promptly, straightening her back, and holding her head very stiffly.

"Why not?" pursued her sister.

"It would not—not—be right for unmarried women to receive such a young man in the capacity of medical adviser. He is only twenty-nine! A mere boy!"

"But sister," with some hesitation, and the ready blush rising to her smooth cheek, "it is said Dr. Peters will take no night work now, and that he is quite laid up occasionally with the rheumatism. What would you do if he were ill, and you required some one here?"

"There is Sparrow of Helaton," she replied, briefly. "I would call him in."

"Oh, surely not, sister," broke out Miss Anne. "It would be an affront to dear, kind, Dr. Peters."

"Yes. I hardly think that would do, sister," observed Miss Mary in her low, sweet tones. "It would not do to pass over our old doctor's partner."

"Perhaps not," agreed Aunt Jane after a minute's reflection, always influenced by her youngest sister's wise and sensible opinion. "I trust, Heaven willing, that none of us may



require the services of either of them for a long time."

However, we did. Six months later Aunt Mary fell ill with a sort of low fever, and it being winter time, and the elder partner confined to his room with a sharp attack of rheumatism, Doctor Hadlow was obliged to come and minister to the invalid's necessities.

In a very short time he won over Aunt Jane, who declared she had the greatest confidence in him. He was so refined and gentle in his treatment, so sympathetic and capable that he became a great favourite with the three old ladies who were never tired of sounding his praises, and certainly he was unremitting in his attentions during the year of aunt's illness, and often looked in to see her when she recovered, more in a friendly way than otherwise, for the illness left her rather delicate and easily fatigued, and Dr. Peters found, perhaps a trifle to his chagrin, that he was no longer a necessity at Skerryvoran, though Miss Anne always welcomed him with undisguised delight and warmth—a proceeding which occasionally drew down a rebuke on her head from her grave, elder sister.

However, they were all very grateful to the doctor for having pulled Aunt Mary through an illness which at one time threatened to end fatally, and, to show their gratitude, were giving a little dinner which had been talked about and conned over for weeks.

To them it was a momentous event, a landmark in their quiet and uneventful lives. To me it was a pleasant break, for wholesome, healthy, peaceful, as my life was at Skerryvoran, it was yet a little monotonous, a trifle dull, and, with the selfishness of youth, I grasped at any change, any amusement, anything that would bring a fresh interest into my life.

## CHAPTER II.

"Past and future, hence away!

Jay diffused throughout the earth,  
Centre in this moment's mirth,  
Of ecstatic holiday.

Once in all their lives' dull story,  
Touch them, fate, with April glory."

WHEN I got down to the drawing-room after donning my white muslin dress, I found Aunt Jane magnificent in a black satin gown and point lace, and a wonderful cap with gold flowers and feathers, and furbelows, standing before the fireplace bolt upright, her mittened hands crossed before her, while in an arm-chair near sat Aunt Mary attired in a black grenadine, liberally trimmed with white lace, a little cap of the same perched on her neatly-combed black hair. She did not seem to be quite at her ease, and ever and anon her eyes turned expectantly to the door on which Miss Trotpole's were fixed, with almost angry intensity.

"Really, I am surprised at Anne!" she exclaimed at last. "She ought to be dressed long ago; she will not be down to receive our guests."

"She will come soon now, sister," replied my godmother, soothingly.

"It ought to be soon, or the Perkins will be here; you know Niralta Perkins is always punctual; in fact, she errs on the side of being too punctual."

"Yes, sister, but it wants twenty minutes to seven yet."

"Niralta will be here in another five minutes. It will never do for Anne not to be here to receive her with us. Helen, dear child! run and urge your aunt to use despatch."

Thus adjured, I ran lightly up the wide oaken staircase, and knocking at a door straight opposite, went in without waiting for permission.

Aunt Anne was standing before the mirror, draping some filmy lace round the neck of her

dress, which was open a little way and displayed her white throat, fair, round, full as a girl's. It was of grey silk with a little shiny satiny spot on it; a bunch of pale blue ribbons draped it slightly at one side, and knots of the same decorated the sleeves and bosom. On her feet were dainty black French shoes, with coquettish little bows; black mittens adorned her plump hands, which shone and sparkled with several quaint old rings; and she had just fastened the lace at her breast, modestly fashion, with a brooch of the frying-pan order, quantity more than quality having, apparently, been the aim of the designer. Her silken hair was arranged with the greatest care; her smooth cheeks were flushed, her blue eyes sparkled with excitement, and altogether she looked like a quaint and exceedingly pretty picture.

"Helen!" she said, in a voice scarcely above a whisper, as I entered, "do you think I might wear a flower?" her eyes resting longingly as she spoke on an exquisite spray of white roses just tinged with pink that stood in a specimen glass on the toilet table.

"A flower? Of course, aunt," I replied, promptly, pinning the spray at the side of her neck. "And now, are you ready? Aunt Jane is afraid the people will arrive before you come down."

"Yes, I am ready," she assented, stealing a last look in the mirror, and then picking up a lace-trimmed handkerchief, about the size of a small table-cloth, which exhaled a slight perfume of dried rose leaves, she trotted out of the room and down the staircase beside me.

I saw Aunt Jane's brow contract with quick displeasure as she surveyed her sister's gay and somewhat youthful costume and flower, and she was just opening her mouth to administer a reproof to this thoughtless, vain, younger relative, when a sounding peal at the bell rang out, and stopped the homily.

"Anne, stand by me; Mary, don't get up until they are in the room; every one will excuse you after your recent illness," and then she stood erect, trying to appear unconcerned, but really trembling with excitement.

The first arrivals proved to be Mr. and Mrs. Perkins, and Perkins Junior—a charming old couple, whose graceless cub of a son seemed to be of quite another breed and race, so different was he from the old folk. Five minutes later the Reverend Mark Mavis appeared, looking gaunt and famished, as though he and a good meal had long been strangers to each other, and lastly the doctors came, and were very warmly welcomed, Aunt Anne actually beaming on Doctor Peters, who immediately began to chat volubly to her, and finally took her in to dinner, though Doctor Hadlow ought to have been her cavalier. However, he took Aunt Mary, while Aunt Jane led the way with Mr. Perkins, and I brought up the rear with the cub, the half-starved curate falling to Mrs. Perkins' lot.

The table looked very pretty with its load of lovely flowers, and beautiful china and plate, and even if some of the things were a trifle old-fashioned and out of date, nobody noticed it, for the viands were good, and dressed to perfection, and the wines were old and mellow, having been in my grandfather's cellar many years.

The generous liquor loosened the cub's tongue, and he discoursed fluently about a neat thing in spotted neckties that he had seen in town during a recent visit to the gay metropolis, and the cut of the "club chaps'" boots, and many other things not altogether of the kind a young woman cares to listen to. However, I did not listen. I let him run on like a mill stream, giving a sort of grunt every now and again when he paused. To tell the truth, I was listening to Doctor Hadlow discoursing about the outbreak of fever and diphtheria in the neighbouring village of Helston. He sat just opposite me with Aunt Mary, and I could hear every word they said, and as their conversation was infinitely more interesting than the cub's, I did not hesitate about listening.

"Yes," I heard him say in answer to a

remark of aunt's, "the whole place is in an unsanitary condition. It is perfectly scandalous. The owner ought to be prosecuted. Oh! away is he? Abandonism again. You see it is bad here in England as well as in Ireland."

"Of course. It is difficult to make a man do his duty when he is the other side of the world."

"Exactly. I suppose it is indolence and carelessness rather than absolute wanton indifference; at any rate, we will hope so, for I think the hardest heart would melt at sight of those poor little children choking and dying with diphtheria, and those gaunt, spectre-like men and women, who drag themselves wearily about the place, emaciated and enervated by the damp, unwholesome atmosphere, and who fall ready victims to this insidious fever."

"How terrible! Can nothing be done?"

"Very little, I fear, without the owner."

"It is very different at Penvalle," observed aunt, as though a little anxious to get away from a painful and unpleasant subject.

"Sir Percy Masham's place?"

"Yes."

"Oh, he is simply a model landlord. Each of his tenants has an airy, convenient cottage, with all the new fangled and best arrangements for drainage and ventilation, etc., and it appears to be bound to keep the gardens and the outside neat and trim. There is never a dirty blind, weedy gardens, neglected children, or slatternly women to be seen there. Misery, poverty and dirt seem to be unknown things at Penvalle."

"Yet he is an absentee?"

"Has been away four years, I believe."

"Yes; Lady Louisa suffered with her chest, and the doctors advised a prolonged stay in Italy."

"I see."

"Of course her son went with her. He is an estimable young man in every way. It is a pleasure to know him and contemplate his actions."

"It is always pleasant to see a man do his duty nobly," replied the doctor, with little up-lifting of his head peculiar to him when he wished to emphasize what he said, and then their conversation drifted into less interesting channels, and the cub claimed my attention again by asking me if I thought a green, or a blue veil would be best to wear at the Derby on the following Wednesday? but as I had never been to a race in my life and knew nothing at all about the Derby, I was not able to help him materially to a decision, and I was not sorry when Aunt Jane soon after gave the signal for the ladies to retire.

Dr. Hadlow held open the door for us, and as I passed through he stooped his tall head, and said with the rare smile that lit up his his rather stern face so pleasantly,—

"I shall hope to hear my favourite song to-night."

I blushed, and nodded assent, and felt my heart pulse rapidly under my muslin bodice as I crossed the hall demurely in the wake of my elders, who were unconscious of this little bit of bye-play.

Mrs. Perkins was playing the Taglioni waltz, when the gentlemen came into the drawing-room, the cub looking a little flustered, and walking the least bit in the world unsteadily, and Dr. Peters steered straight for the sofa, where Aunt Anne was sitting, fanning herself vigorously with a mite of a Chinese ivory fan that could have been no manner of use in producing a current of air, while Dr. Hadlow joined me at the open window, and discoursed fluently about the stars, and Venus, and Ursa Major and Minor, &c.

"Doctor," I began, when there was a pause in the conversation, "I want to ask you if I can be of any use at Helston?"

"Of use at Helston?" he repeated, surprisedly, fixing his clear, grey eyes on me scrutinizingly. "In what way do you mean, Miss Markham?"

"In helping to nurse the sick," I replied, promptly.

"You know the fever is a very nasty one, difficult to get rid of when once caught?"

"Yes, I know," I agreed, meeting his glance for a second, and then lowering my lids with an unaccountable feeling of shyness.

"And that the diphtheria is of a very malignant type?"

"Yes; I have heard there have been several deaths from it."

"And yet—you would go into that disease-stricken village?"

"If I could be of any use to the poor sick people, yes."

"It is very noble of you!" he said, earnestly. "But—would your aunts let you go?"

"I—I don't know," I faltered, for I knew they were too fond of me to like to let me run any risk.

"Neither do I; yet I think not. And even if they would, I could not let you go into danger, Miss Helen."

"There might be no danger," I murmured, thrilled through by the low, intense tones of the man beside me, and his glance, which was fixed on me with curious intentness.

"There would be great danger of infection."

"I am so strong," I objected. "I have never had a day's illness."

"No reason why you should not catch the fever. I could not let you go. Come, now, and sing my favourite; Mrs. Perkins has vacated the music stool," and he led the way to the piano, and, seating himself before it, struck the opening bars,—

"The arrow to the quiver,  
And the wild bird to the tree;  
The stream to meet the river,  
And the river to the sea.  
The waves are wedded on the beach,  
The shadows on the lea;  
And like to like, and each to each,  
And I to thee."

How I sang that night! My whole soul seemed to flow out through my lips in a flood of melody, rising, falling, softening, dying away to a murmur, throbbing on the warm, summer air.

I seemed to electrify my audience and my accompanist, for he thanked me with ardent warmth when it was over, and begged for more songs, keeping me at the piano for quite an hour.

The last I sang was one with some more pretty lines of Whyte-Melville's, only more melancholy,—

"What are we waiting for? Oh, my heart!  
Kiss me straight on the brows, and part!  
Again! again! My heart! my heart!  
What are we waiting for, you and I!  
A pleading look, a stifled cry.  
Good-bye for ever! Good-bye! good-bye!"

I knew my voice was an uncommon one—so rich, so round, so full, and I did my best in that last song.

"Beautifully rendered!" exclaimed Doctor Hadlow. "A charming melody and pretty words, only too sad. I do not like good-byes: they are always painful, and I know I should find it very painful to say good-bye for ever to you, Miss Helen," and then as he bade good-night he pressed my hand tenderly, and I felt a thrill of pleasure (so exquisite as to be akin to pain) run through me from head to foot at his pressure and meaning words.

Oh, men! men! why do you say things you do not mean? Why wake up the knowledge of love in a young heart, only to crush and kill it cruelly? Why arouse the tumultuous springs of passion, touching the heart strings with careless and perchance, indifferent touch, only to leave them dumb ever after? Ah! it is a problem no woman can solve; a riddle for which there is no answer; for sometimes

"Sorrow is wrought by want of thought,  
As well as by want of heart."

And even in my moments of deepest anguish,

of most bitter despair, I could never bring myself to believe that John Hadlow was wantonly cruel, or utterly heartless. No! it was fate, destiny (call it what you please), and he was powerless to resist the siren's spell, powerless to be true to me.

### CHAPTER III.

"Have a care! She is fair,

The White Witch there,

In her crystal cave up a jewelled stair.

She has spells for the living would waken the dead,

And they lurk in the line of her lip so red,

And they lurk in the turn of her delicate head,

And the golden gleam on her hair."

The next day Nora arrived. I drove Aunt Jane down to the station in the basket phaeton, drawn by Cosmo, the old grey pony, who was so fat he could only waddle at a sort of jog-trot, and never attempted the madness of a canter or gallop.

We arrived quite twenty minutes before the train was due, for Aunt always insisted upon starting at least half an hour before it was necessary, and while we were waiting Doctor Hadlow came out of the station and stopped to speak to us.

"How are you, Miss Trotpole? Not fatigued, I trust, after your hospitality of last night?"

"Not at all!" replied Aunt Jane, with a gracious smile; "it was a pleasant break in our quiet lives."

"Yes, yes! and beneficial! A little excitement does one a world of good."

"Yes! a little; not too much."

"Too much of anything is good for nothing," he laughed. "You are expecting another niece to-day, are you not?" he went on, speaking to aunt, but looking at me, and something in his eyes made a warm blush rise over cheek and brow, and a blush which I am sure he saw and noted.

"Yes! A young thing, a mere child. She spent four years with us before, and has been in Paris at school."

"I see. A pleasant companion for you, Miss Helen."

"Delightful!" I cried, warmly. "I am very fond of little Nora; she is so gay and bright."

"True!" said Aunt, with rather a serious expression; "but the child wants careful training and very judicious management. I fear she is frivolous and careless; there is no repose about her."

"We can't put staid heads on young shoulders," he smiled. "Your niece will no doubt be grave enough in a few years. Time works great wonders in that respect."

"You are right, and yet," with a portentous sigh, that made her breast heave, and stirred the laces on the front of her mantle stormily, "I would rather she showed more seriousness and sedateness now. As the boy is father to the man, so is a girl mother to the woman. It is impossible to entirely alter a nature."

"Perhaps! Only a great deal that is not desirable can be eliminated, and careful training is the best thing for a child."

"True, true. But these last three years will have done a great deal towards moulding her character, and what sort of training has she had? Of a kind possibly that we might not approve of."

"Possibly. Still hope for the best. Good-bye."

"Thank you for those songs," he whispered, as he pressed my hand, and again the warm blushes mantled over my face and brow.

In after days how angry I felt with myself, and how humiliated! Those tell-tale blushes that revealed to John Hadlow the fact that I had given him my heart unsought and unasked.

A few moments later the train came into view, gliding like a snake through the green and verdant hills, smirching the clear sky with a thick cloud of smoke as it came along,

panting and snorting and drew up at the little country station.

Aunt Jane got out of the carriage and went forward to look for Nora. She would not permit me to do so. I knew nothing on earth would have induced her to trust herself alone behind poor, fat, harmless Cosmo. So I was left alone while she went on to the platform. Divers passengers streamed out and went their different ways, and finally Aunt Jane appeared, with a young girl beside her, and a porter wheeling on his truck a brace of huge boxes, and a heap of smaller impedimenta that were stowed into the carrier's cart to be taken up to Skerryvoran, while aunt and Nora got into the pony carriage, the latter giving me an impulsive hug and half-a-dozen kisses before she settled herself opposite us, and shook out the flounces and furbelows of her pretty grey gown, made in the height of the last Parisian fashion.

Indeed, her whole costume was extremely chic and fashionable, and smacked more of the Boulevards and the Champs Elysées than of a seminary where good precept and unworldliness were inculcated along with languages and accomplishments.

I saw Aunt Jane cast several displeased looks at the big dish-like hat with its drooping grey plumes, at the long gloves of the same colour with at least two dozen buttons, at the little pointed-toe bottines, and the flounces and furbelows.

For myself I could do nothing but gaze at her face, and it was fortunate that Cosmo was old, and fat, and lazy, and knew the way home thoroughly, or we might have come to grief.

Pretty she had been as a child, now she had bloomed into a most lovely girl. It was the sweetest, most winsome face imaginable that peeped out from under the broad-leaved beplumed hat.

Her eyes were deep blue, merry, bright eyes, with a double row of thick, black lashes, her hair was of a bright sunny brown, almost bronze, her saucy nose was *retroussé*, the mouth small and red lipped, and curved like a Cupid's bow, while the chin was dimpled as a baby's. Her skin was darker than that usually seen with blue eyes, and her cheek wore a lovely bloom, like the side of a sun-kissed peach, and the little curls and tendrils of hair straying over the broad, low forehead, clinging round the shell-like ears, and curling lovingly round the slender throat, made a fitting frame for the bright, beautiful, attractive face. How dull, insignificant and drab-coloured I felt beside her. My brown hair seemed colourless, my skin sallow, my whole self commonplace.

What would Doctor Hadlow think of her? For a moment a mighty wave of jealousy swept over me, then I crushed it down. The doctor was just thirty; a girl of seventeen would be a mere child to him, and he was usually grave and sedate, and the sorrow and sickness he saw so much of, imparted a seriousness to his manner that made him appear older than he really was. Such a bright butterfly as Nora would appear almost like an inhabitant of another sphere to him.

Both Aunt Anne and Aunt Mary were waiting in the porch to welcome the traveller, and she was kissed again and again by both, and then the former holding her at arms' length, exclaimed,—

"How lovely you are, child. Just what your dear mother was at the same age."

"Anne!" exclaimed Aunt Jane, severely. "how can you be so imprudent, putting ridiculous ideas into the child's head!"

"I—I—didn't mean to, sister," faltered the culprit. "Only she is so like poor Ethel."

"Perhaps; you need not tell her she is a beauty, though, Nora. I hope you don't set much store by that vanity, evanescent possession—good looks?"

"I don't know, aunt," she returned, promptly and carelessly, "I rather think I do."



"Vanity! vanity!" groaned Miss Trot-pole.

"It's much nicer to have pretty hair," unconsciously stroking the little bronze curls on her forehead, "and to have rosy cheeks than to be drab-coloured like Keziah, washed-out looking."

"Nora! Nora! She is as Heaven made her. I must talk to you seriously, child."

"Aunt Jane isn't half as nice as she used to be," remarked my cousin that night when we had retired to the bedroom we shared in common, and were disrobing.

"Don't you think so?" I replied.

"No, I don't. She has lectured me already twice since I've been here, and means to go on, I think, from what she said to-day."

"It is so ridiculous!" she burst out a moment later, "as though one should not be proud of hair like this," touching the shining waves of hair that, unbound, rippled in a flood of sunny light below her waist.

She had taken off her dress, and sat in her white petticoat and low body, which revealed the beautifully rounded milk-white arms and slender throat.

"I should be proud of it," I acknowledged.

"Of course. So would any sensible person. Aunt Anne said she would, and our mother of the church (her name for Aunt Mary). I don't see the use of Aunt Jane being crabby and disagreeable because her lover died years and years ago, and she couldn't marry. It's nonsense; Madame de Bruse was far more sensible. She never lectured us. Only told us to be very careful of any personal attractions we might possess."

"You wouldn't mourn and regret a lover all your life, Nora?" I queried, interrogatively.

"Certainly not," she replied, contemplating the tips of her tiny kid slippers.

"What would you do if the man you were engaged to marry died?"

"Look out for another after a decent interval."

"Not if you cared for him very passionately."

"Perhaps not. Only——"

"Only what?" I asked, a trifle impatiently.

"I don't think, Nell, I ever shall love any man very passionately."

"You don't know, you may."

"I may of course. But I should infinitely prefer being beloved intensely to loving very much myself. It doesn't answer adoring one's husband. Much better and more satisfactory to be adored."

"You seem to know a good deal about it," I remarked, looking at her keenly. "Who has been instructing you?"

"Madame de Bruse was very sentimental, and would talk by the hour beautifully."

"Strange thing for a schoolmistress to do."

"She was strict enough, though, actually. I never even had the ghost of a lover in Paris. Still, I think I ought to have had some," and she cast a merry glance at her winsome reflection in the mirror. "Most of the women over there touch up their complexions. Mine is natural and won't come off," rubbing the rounded cheeks hard.

"Plenty of time for lovers," I said, severely.

"You're only a child, Nora."

"Pooh!" she laughed. "You're taking a leaf out of my Aunt Jane's book. How stiff and prim you do look. Nell, that comes of living with old maids. Heigho! I hope it won't be terribly dull here, or I shall have to write to father and ask him to let me go out to India."

"I am sure he won't let you do that," I said, decidedly, as I put out the candle and got into bed.

I think Nora did find it dull during the next two days; there was nothing going on, and no doubt the change from the gay bustle of Paris to the hum-drum quiet of Standron was trying.

"Are there no young men in this benighted little place?" she asked me on the third day after her arrival.

"Very few."

"Do the few ever come to Skerryvoran?"

"Sometimes."

"When? I should like to have an opportunity of seeing them. They must be natural curiosities?"

"You will be gratified probably this afternoon."

"How? Why?" turning a pair of bright, inquiring eyes on me.

"Our aunts always remain at home on the first Saturday in the month, and friends and acquaintances come to see them, and——"

"And drink weak tea and listen to Aunt Jane's homilies," she laughed. "This is a new thing. I had no idea they were so fashionable."

"They don't do it for fashion," I told her.

"For what, then?"

"To see old friends who come from a distance. They were often disappointed at finding them out."

"I see. And where do they drink tea and talk scandal?"

"My dear Nora, they don't talk scandal." "Well, then, leave out the scandal. Where is the cat-lap consumed?"

"In winter in the drawing-room, in summer out here on the lawn, under the big cedar."

"That's rather jolly!" she exclaimed, childishly, her face brightening. "And do they ever have anything worth eating?"

"What do you say to strawberries and cream?"

"Delicious! Do the aunts really permit them to be eaten? I thought they were only to be looked at," casting a glance at the strawberry beds, where the luscious, tempting fruit peeped out redly from among the green leaves.

"Yes. Keziah has gathered a big bowl full, and there she comes to set out the table."

"This is fun. Regular dissipation. I did not think our staid and elderly relatives were so gay."

"Really Nora, you ought not to speak of the aunts in that way," I began, reprovingly, but I was talking to the air. The giddy girl had floated away, and was teasing and hindering Keziah with a heap of totally unanswerable questions which puzzled the good soul wondrously.

Presently the three Miss Trotpoles appeared in their best bibs and tuckers, and sat down under the cedar.

Aunt Jane bolt upright with an antique cookery book in her hands, which she studied from time to time with the help of a pair of thick rimmed silver spectacles, Aunt Anne, with a piece of muslin, which she stabbed with a miniature dagger, and then stitched over with regular and monotonous precision; Aunt Mary with a volume of Carlyle, I sat near them reading Tennyson, and Nora fitted hither and thither like a butterfly or a bird, or any bright, joyous, restless thing.

After a while Mrs. Perkins and her son came, and the cub attached himself at once to my cousin, and paid her blundering compliments, at which she laughed and Aunt Jane frowned; then Mark Mavis came, pale and wretched looking as usual, and his rector and his buxom daughters and some old maiden ladies, and Doctor Peters, who, as usual, found a great deal of interest to say to Aunt Anne, and finally, when the sun was beginning to sink below the level of the tall tree tops and stream in floods of golden light between their massive trunks and gnarled roots, Doctor Hadlow came.

How well he looked that afternoon, almost handsome with his erect bearing, clean shaven face, save for the heavy moustache and high collar, looking more like an officer than a medical man.

I saw the little movement of surprise he made when he was introduced to Nora, and my jealous eyes noted, too, how long his gaze lingered on the fair face.

They chatted away gaily together, my little cousin starting all sorts of topics of which I should never have thought, and talking fluently and well, while I stood stupidly

by, feeling as though the whole fabric of my life was crumbling away, my castles in the air toppling down about my ears with a cruel vengeance.

"What do you think of her?" was all I could find to say when we were left standing a little apart from the others.

"Think? Of whom?" he asked dreamily.

"Of my cousin."

"Miss Hilliard?"

"Yes."

"She is inexpressibly lovely," his eyes following the fairy-like figure in the white gown, with a bunch of blush roses pinned just underneath the dimpled rounded chin. "I have never seen anything more beautiful than her face, and there is a peculiar charm, a fascination in her manner, which is most alluring."

"She is very winsome," I said dully, the first of many and many an after twinge of pain tugging at my heartstrings, making me feel sick and faint and weary unto death, with a terrible sense of loss and hopelessness, as though something had gone out of my life which would never come back into it, and which left it dull, grey, cheerless!

#### CHAPTER IV.

"Forbear! have a care

Of that beauty so rare;

Of the fair proud face and the queen-like air,

And the love-lighted glances that deepen and shine,

And the coil of bright tresses that glisten and twine,

And the whispers that madden, like kisses or wine,

Too late! Too late to beware!"

It was a curious thing, but after that Jane evening when John Hadlow met Nora Hilliard he seldom let a day pass without coming to Skerryvoran. Of course, since Aunt Mary's illness he had been a pretty constant visitor. After that the day seemed all out of joint when he did not appear. Sometimes he came early in the morning, sometimes in the afternoons, generally in the evening, when the chief burden of the day's work was over, and always he sought Nora's side, and always his clear, grey eyes rested on her fair young face with a hungry eagerness, an adoring gaze, that made the ache at my sad heart grow heavier.

No one could doubt that he loved her. At any rate I did not. I never blinded myself for a moment to the true state of affairs. Even when sometimes he, as of yore, stood beside me at the piano while I sang, and thanked me warmly when I finished, I was never foolish enough to think that he regarded me with the old feeling that I believe he entertained for me before Nora came to Skerryvoran.

As for her, her manner towards him was a mass of contradictions. One day she would be free and open with him as a child, the next, reserved and shy, then haughty and proud, and again she would unbend and bewilder him by a dangerous friendliness, showing a flattering interest in him and all that concerned him, and flashing looks from her lovely tell-tale eyes that maddened and intoxicated him with rapture and happiness.

He was ardent and eager, and terribly in earnest. His saucy idol was all gaiety and brightness until he tried to approach her on the subject that lay next his heart, and then she would freeze, or become shy, and fly to me or one of the aunts for protection from this importunate lover.

I suppose they saw what was going on, and approved of it, for not even Aunt Jane ventured on a homily, while Aunt Anne positively beamed upon the lovers, and watched them secretly on every possible occasion.

So matters went on, and the autumn came, and I was not at all surprised when one day she came to me—(I was sitting in our room by the open window, gazing out sadly at "falling leaf and fading tree," my hands lying idly in

my lap)—blushing and dimpling, and kneeling down before me, put two white hands on my knee, and lifting a pair of starry eyes to mine, said:

"Helen!"

"Yes, Nora!" I replied, quietly, trying to school my rebellious heart to bear quietly the news her eyes told me she had to tell.

"I have something to tell you."

"Indeed!"

"Yes! Something I have not yet told the aunts."

"No? What is it, dear?" I said, gently, feeling a strong desire to put her from me and shriek "Don't tell me! don't tell me! I can't bear to hear that you are going to be his wife."

But I conquered the wild impulse, and sat immovable as a statue.

"It—it—is something that—will astonish you," turning her head away half shyly, and playing with a tassel on my gown.

"Will it? Why?" I managed to ask.

"I—I—have had an offer of marriage, Helen."

"An offer of marriage?—a child like you?" I managed to murmur.

"Yes! From whom do you think?"

"I—I—don't—know."

It was my turn to falter now.

"Doctor Hadlow."

"Ah!"

Though I ought to have been prepared for it, the words cut me like a knife.

"You are surprised?"

"A little," I replied, looking down at the winsome face upraised to mine, whose beauty had robbed me of what I most prized on earth.

"So am I!" she laughed gleefully. "He is so big, and strong, and sedate and serious; it does seem funny that he should choose me, want me to be his wife."

"Have—have—you accepted him?" I asked, faintly.

"Why, yes, of course, Helen!"

"Why 'of course,' Nora?"

"Because men are so scarce here, dear. I may never have another chance of becoming a matron, and father won't let me go out to India to him, and it is so dull here at Skerryvoran!"

"And is that why you are going to marry him?" I asked, in amazement.

"Partly," she rejoined, indifferently.

"Don't—don't—you love him, Nora?" I cried, vehemently, seizing both dimpled hands in mine, and holding them tightly.

"Well, I don't know. Don't look so horrified, my old sober-sides of a cousin. I hardly know what love is yet! Perhaps—it will come—after?"

"Isn't this a pretty ring?" she went on, twisting a flashing diamond round and round on her dainty finger. "I feel so proud and important! I wonder what the aunts will say? Do you think they will refuse their consent to our marriage?"

"I don't think so!" I almost groaned. "They think very highly of Doctor Hadlow. Your father is more likely to object than they!"

"Oh, dad has given Aunt Jane full powers to dispose of my hand, though, of course, my heart is at my own disposal!" with a trill of gay laughter.

"He is coming here to-night to learn his fate from the powers that be. How I wonder what Aunt Jane will say! I feel almost afraid—quite nervous!"

However, she need not have felt any fear. The powers were propitious. Everybody approved of John Hadlow as a husband for Nora, and a free and full consent was given to their engagement.

"Dear me!" murmured Aunt Anne, "it quite furries me, makes me feel young again!"

"Then it only makes you feel what you look! My dear madame!" exclaimed Doctor Peters, to whom the remark was made, gallantly. "And I think it would be well for

some of us who are older to follow these young folks' example and get engaged."

But unfortunately at this juncture Aunt Jane came into the room and spoiled sport, and nothing more came then of the old doctor's gallantry.

The months that followed were very trying for me—torturing. John Hadlow was infatuated, and at no pains whatever to hide his infatuation. He was wrapped up, body and soul, in the fair girl who had accepted his love, and wore his ring, and promised to become his wife.

He was just civil to me—so more. He quite forgot that he had ever looked tenderly into my eyes, and held my hand, and whispered tender speeches to me. All his past life seemed swept away in the mad delight of the present.

He lived on her smiles, hung on her words, devoted every moment he could spare from his patients to her pleasure; was tender, devoted, forbearing, kind to the giddy, thoughtless creature, who seemed to have laid such a spell on his senses to have bound him to her by unbreakable bonds.

I suppose that winter was a happy time to them; at any rate, there seemed to be no cloud on their happiness, both looked radiant. But with the early spring came a summons for him.

His widowed mother, who lived with a married daughter in Scotland, was dying, and longed to see him ere she closed her eyes on all things earthly.

Of course he responded to the summons. He was far too good a son to refuse a dying mother's request; and yet I saw his heart was torn with bitter and conflicting emotions, and that he was terribly reluctant to leave Nora, bright, thoughtless, childish Nora.

"Take care of my little love for me, Miss Helen," he said to me in a voice of deep emotion the morning of his departure. "You love her, and I know will care for her."

"I will do my best," I answered, constrainedly.

"That contents me. I can trust you," he said, gratefully, stooping and kissing my hand.

Heavens! how the touch of his lips seemed to burn my flesh. I pulsed and throbbed for hours afterwards with a guilty sort of pleasure at the contact.

Fool that I was! poor, miserable, weak fool, to care so much, so very much, for a man who was to be another woman's husband!

Nora took his departure rather coolly, and employed herself in making some pretty new gowns for the coming summer, which was to be very gay, for Lady Louisa and Sir Percy Masham were coming from Italy, and Penvalle House was to be thrown open once more.

My cousin took a great interest in all the preparations going on at the big house, and we often, very often, by her desire, walked over there, and strolled about the park and gardens, and through the pretty model village that looked so healthy, clean, and prosperous, spoke so well for the young owner.

Penvalle House was of red brick in the Tudor fashion, with a quaint central porch, oriel windows that twinkled in the sunlight against the heavy red, and was partly overgrown with ivy that clung and twined round its many fantastic chimneys lavishly.

The gardens were quaint and old world. Giant oaks and elms centuries old threw dusky shadows on the trim turf, and innumerable sweet-smelling flowers of a bygone age bloomed in company with some of their more modern brethren nine months out of the twelve.

There were vineries there, melon pits, forcing houses, conservatories, a heronry, a park where the graceful, wild-eyed deer couched amongst the bracken, preserves where gorgeous pheasants were reared at enormous cost, splendid stables and kennels, in fact, everything that a rich man gathers about him in the country.

Nora seemed fascinated by the place, and

listened eagerly to all that was said about the young baronet.

He bore a high character in the neighbourhood. Mothers and maids alike looked with favourable eyes on this *bon parti*, and, moreover, *bon garçon*.

However, he had been adamant to their tender glances, and though always attentive and polite to ladies, young or old, never overstepped the bounds laid down by the strictest prude, nor flirted, nor ogled, nor squeezed soft hands, nor gazed into soft eyes, nor did any of those things he might naturally have been expected to do, and which the non-performance of considerably disappointed the fair ones of the neighbourhood.

"He is the coldest man I ever met," declared one fast and frisky matron, who would willingly have dragged him a captive at her chariot wheels.

"He has no eyes for good looks," smirked an unappropriated blessing of forty, who was quite ready to exchange single blessedness for double courtesies.

"Must have some secret love affair," sniffed a matron, the mother of five bouncing girls, who had tried her best to catch the master of Penvalle House for one or other of her progeny.

Such were the remarks passed on him, many of which came to his ears, and made him laugh heartily, my aunts told me, for he was one of their favourites, and Lady Louisa often invited them to the House when she was in residence there, for she found them ready and sympathetic listeners to all her ailments and troubles.

I had often been in the old Tudor mansion, Nora never. She had been a mere child before they left for Italy, busy with her governess and lessons, and Aunt Jane had never permitted her to accept any of the general and inclusive invitations given by Lady Louisa to all the inmates of Skerryvoran.

Her curiosity, therefore, in Sir Percy Masham and his home was at fever heat, and she waited with barely concealed anxiety for their arrival, and somewhat to my astonishment bought a lot of new hats and ribbons and shoes, for her father's allowance was liberal in the extreme, and she had treble what most girls of her age have to spend on furbelows and personal adornments, and had never to deny herself of anything, and the stock of pretty things she laid in was astonishing.

But I, not quite understanding the gay, thoughtless creature, was foolishly under the impression she was doing it with a view to further fascinating and subjugating her betrothed.

## CHAPTER V.

"I must not think of thee; and tired yet strong,  
I shun the love that lurks in all delight—  
The love of thee—

But it must never, never come in sight;  
I must stop short of thee the whole day long."

"They have come!"

I was sitting in the garden one warm April afternoon, the lilac was blowing, pink and white apple blossom glittered amongst the green leaves, and the beeches showed their dark purple foliage, and the limes displayed a most beautiful livery, and the blackthorns were snowy, and the laburnums golden, the lute-voiced blackbird and the soaring lark sang gaily, and the rakish cuckoo called his mocking notes, ringing and vibrating on the soft balmy air, and all nature was bright and fair and gay with that sense of juvenescence which she most plainly shows in the "fickle fourth month of the year."

I started at being addressed, and looking up from my book found Nora standing before me.

"They have come," she repeated, nodding her bright head.

"Who have come?" I asked, slightly bewildered.

"Lady Louisa and Sir Percy."



"Oh!"

"I am so glad," she cried, gleefully.

"What a remarkable interest you take in the Mashams," I remarked, looking at her closely.

"Of course."

"Why 'of course'?"

"Well, I hardly think you need ask. There are such a dull set of old fogies here that one is likely to die of ennui. Perhaps they will make the place a little gay and endurable."

"You forget Lady Louisa is an invalid."

"She is much—much better. As nearly well as she ever can be."

"Who told you?" I asked in astonishment, for she spoke with a certainty that showed she had her information from a good source.

"Sir Percy," she murmured, casting down her eyes, while a lovely blush suffused her cheeks.

"Sir Percy!" I echoed in amazement.

"How? When? Where?"

"In Three Acre Lane this afternoon."

"But—but," I stammered, "you don't know him?"

"Oh, yes I do," she replied, coolly. "He often used to pat me on the head five years ago when I was a little girl, and give me dragées and packets of bonbons when Pattison took me out, and we used to meet him in the lanes and meadows, and he often said it was a shame Miss Troppole didn't let me go up to the House, that I was far too pretty a child to be shut up in the schoolroom."

"Oh, indeed!" I managed to ejaculate.

"And, Helen, will you believe it, he knew me at once this afternoon, and jumped off his horse and shook hands, saying he was quite sure I was little Nora Hilliard grown up into a young lady? And oh! Helen, he is so handsome. Such lovely brown eyes, such a moustache, such beautiful black hair, and so tall and elegant. I have never seen anyone like him or to be compared to him."

"Not even Dr. Hadlow?" I put in, sarcastically.

"Oh, no. John is not handsome nor sentimental-looking. Sir Percy is both, and such an aristocrat, and his clothes fit beautifully. I do like to see a man well-dressed."

"Really," I said, severely, "I think your Parisian education has not done you much good. You talk too much about men, and I believe you have not written to your intended for three days. I should think you had better go and do it now instead of letting your thoughts stray to other men, in whom you possibly can have no legitimate interest."

I spoke very bitterly, I felt so sore. She seemed to hold the treasure that I coveted—John Hadlow's love—so lightly. The child did not speak, but she raised her great blue eyes and looked at me for fully a moment, then she turned and went slowly towards the House.

From that day a chasm yawned between us, separating our lives, and the affection felt for each other appeared to lessen, while she no longer confided all her thoughts and hopes to me with childish enthusiasm as she had done.

I regretted the change, but was powerless to alter the state of affairs by a hair's breadth.

A few days later Lady Louisa drove over to Skerryvoran and tendered an invitation for Nora to go to Penvale House and stay with her. She seemed quite fascinated by the bright, lovely girl, and yet I thought Sir Percy might have prompted the invitation.

My aunts accepted it. Indeed, they seemed pleased and flattered at it, and as she had plenty of pretty new things there was nothing to hinder her going. She went the next day.

My heart misgave me as I saw her drive off, sitting in the carriage beside Lady Louisa, her fair face bright with blushes, dimpling with smiles raised to the young Baronet, who rode at her side by the carriage, managing his spirited horse with infinite grace and skill.

John Hadlow had left his love in my care, but what could I do? I was helpless. I could

not prevent her going to the House. I could not prevent Sir Percy admiring her, or her giddy head being turned by his admiration; and if my aunts approved it was not for me to set my opinion against theirs, so I say again, I was helpless.

We all missed her very much. Skerryvoran seemed dull enough without her ringing laughter and gay voice, and we were glad when she came back ten days later.

Only ten days! and yet what a change was wrought in the child. Her cheeks wore a deeper bloom, her eyes were full of a soft, dreamy light. She sighed often, she seemed suddenly to have matured from a beautiful child into a most lovely woman, with all a woman's capacity for loving and suffering.

I guessed, with sinking heart and a great sense of pity, what had changed her, guessed that she had learned in those ten days the great lesson of life, the master passion to which all others play but a subordinate part. It was all conjecture. She did not say a word to me, only shunned me, and appeared shy and ill at ease in my presence.

All my worst fears were realised at a dance given at Penvale House a few days later.

Nora looked most lovely. Her filmy black dress set off the bronze hair and rich complexion admirably. There was a flush on her delicate cheeks, a starlike gleam in her eyes, as Percy Masham took her in his arms and glided over the floor with her to the strains of some soul-subduing melancholy waltz.

I noticed how closely he held her, how tenderly he looked at his companion, and I felt he was getting mad over Nora!—mad with love, and that in his madness he would forget all save the alluring object of his passion, and I doubted her. I doubted her having strength to resist the passionate pleading of the handsome man at her side.

Constancy, honour, faith, what were they when weighed in the balance against love? Nothing. "Such a lord is love," a lord no young girl can resist. I felt she would not resist, and in my anguish, and my wish to save John Hadlow pain, I glided after them when they went out on the terrace, and stood in the shadow of a statue.

"I shall never let you go again, Nora," Sir Percy was saying in impassioned tones as he stood beside her looking down at the face etherealised to an unearthly loveliness by the moonbeams.

"Not let me go, Sir Percy!" she murmured, as though not understanding.

"No. Keep you here until you are my wife!"

"But I cannot be, I cannot be!" she cried, quickly.

"Do you not love me?" he asked with seductive tenderness.

"Yes, I love you," she sighed.

"Then you will be my wife, dearest?"

"No. It is—impossible!" she replied, brokenly.

"Is anything impossible to love?" he asked, passionately, trying to gaze into the eyes shyly turned away from him.

"This must be."

"Will you condemn me to a life of misery? Think, sweetheart, how wretched we shall both be."

"But—my promise," she moaned. "I cannot break it."

"Not even for my sake?" throwing an arm round her and drawing her closer to him.

"Oh, Percy, do not tempt me. Faith and honour bind me to him."

"Will you speak of such an empty tie when you are mine, and mine alone?" stooping to kiss the quivering lips that were not turned away from his eager passionate caress.

"He loves me," she faltered.

"And so do I. What is his love to mine? Oh, Nora, do not blast and lay waste my whole life. I cannot live without you."

"You must, you must. In pity let me go!" striving feebly to free herself from the strong arms clasped round her.

"I will not let you go. Listen! You love me, do you not?"

"Yes. Better than anything else in the world!" moaned the poor child, laying her head on his breast, as though storm-tossed and weary there she could find rest."

"And you do not love John Hadlow?"

"No. I know now I do not love him."

How I trembled as I heard these words, so incomprehensible to me.

"Then have you ever thought what a sin you would be committing if you married him loving me?"

"Oh, Percy!" she gasped, "no."

"You would be. Your every thought is mine. Your heart is mine, and you must be mine, too. Put your hand in mine, darling, and swear to be my wife."

But instead she looked at him with dim, uncertain eyes, and swaying away from him, fell prone along the marble terrace—cold, white, insensible.

He gathered her up in his arms and strode off quickly to the House, while I stood staring stupidly at the spot where she had fallen. I seemed to be spell-bound and without the power of volition, and when at last I recovered my senses and returned to the ball-room I found my aunts ready to go, and anxious at my non-appearance.

They told me Nora had been taken ill, and was going to remain the night at Penvale House, and I made no remark. What was the use? What could I do to stem the mighty current of Percy Masham and Nora Hilliard's love? I was but a weak, helpless woman, and I could not save the man I loved from pain and sorrow; fate was too strong for me; but I knew intuitively that we should not see Nora again until she was Lady Masham.

And I was right.

Three days later Aunt Jane received a letter from the baronet, telling how he had made Nora his wife, how deeply and devotedly they loved each other, and asking her to forgive him and his wife for having married in such a fashion. It was a straightforward, manly letter, but it softened Miss Troppole's heart not one whit. Her creed of honour was stern, rigid, upright, she was shocked, horrified, and refused to receive Lady Masham or her husband, and did not permit either of her sisters to do so, even though Lady Louisa pleaded their cause strongly, for she very soon forgave the lovers, and openly declared she adored her son's young wife.

But it was not until a year later, when Nora's baby came and her life was in danger, that Miss Troppole relented and allowed us all to go to Penvale House to see the culprit invalid, and amicable relations were restored between the two families.

In the meantime John Hadlow returned from the North. His mother rallied a little at the coming of the warm weather, and he came down once more South to look after his sick people and his love.

I was in the garden on the morning that he first turned his steps to Skerryvoran. It was barely a week after Nora's marriage, and he knew nothing of it. He came blithely along, eager to meet the girl he loved, but instead of her rose-bud winsome face to greet him in the porch was Miss Jane, looking severe and grim and ashamed.

I never knew what she said to him. Whether she tried to soften the blow, or told him the truth in plain unvarnished terms, but I do know that when he came once more down the garden path he was a changed man. He looked ten years older. The happy eager look had left his face. It looked cold, frozen, as though a death blow had been dealt him, and as he passed me with blind unseeing eyes I heard a heavy sob burst from his bloodless lips, and knew what terrible agony he suffered. However, he was no coward. He did not run away from Standron. He took up the burden of life and bore it manfully, and many and many dying lips blessed him, and many and many a squallid home was the brighter and better for his presence.

I believe he met Nora sometimes in society, but I never saw them together, for which I was thankful. He came often to Skerryvoran, and I saw the cloud lift gradually from off his kind and genial face, until at the end of two years he was his old self again, and seemed in no wise the worse that Lady Masham had jilted him.

Then a thing took place which electrified us all.

Doctor Peters proposed to Aunt Anne, and she actually accepted him, though Aunt Jane told her there "was no fool like an old fool."

Seeing the mature lovers together, and also seeing how much attached they were, and how eminently well suited to each other, I could not think that they were fools, and I was glad when the day came that made them one, and released dear Aunt Anne from the constant and scornful remarks of her elder sister.

After the wedding was over, and the bride and her groom, both beaming with happiness and pride, had driven off on the first stage of their honeymoon, I retired to Aunt Mary's little cosy sanatorium under the eaves, where a cheerful fire was burning, for the autumn day was chilly, and stood with one foot on the fender looking down into the heart of the glowing embers.

I don't know how long I stood there lost in a somewhat gloomy retrospect, when I suddenly became conscious that I was not alone. Looking up with a start I found Doctor Hadlow beside me.

"Day dreaming, Helen?" he asked, with a smile, drawing nearer, and looking down into my eyes. "Tell me your dreams?"

"They are not worth telling," I answered, hurriedly, blushing furiously, and fancying he must hear the mad pulsings of my heart.

"No?" with a ring of disappointment in his tone. "Do you know I fancied, nay I hoped, they might be of me?"

"Doctor Hadlow!" I exclaimed, in indignant surprise.

"Were they not, Helen, my Helen?" trying to take my hand. "Now confess!"

"Is it possible that you have forgotten?" I asked, amazedly, for I had thought his love for Nora would end only with his life.

"No; I have not forgotten; but I am cured of my folly," he returned, pointedly. "I suffered horribly for a while; then a sweet face came between me and my pain—a face that I know now I loved always—before I saw that fairer one that bewitched me for a while, and blinded me to the true state of my heart. The face was yours, Helen, and I want you to give me the right always to have it with me—always to be able to look at it, my noble darling—always to have you beside me, to encourage me to better things. Helen, will you be my wife? Will you forgive the past, and be all in all to me?"

And for answer I put my hand in his, and said, "yes. I am not your first love," I added, half wistfully, looking up into his dear face.

"Yes; my first and my last love, and my dearest," he said, tenderly, as he drew me within the circle of his supporting arm, and pressed me to his heart, while our lips met in a long, fond kiss, the pledge and seal of our betrothal.

[THE END.]

## BEAUTY AND HER SISTER.

It was that pleasantest time of all the year, when apple-trees were in bloom and the meadows were starred over with golden dandelions, and Daisy Ellerton sat in the window of the cottage, sewing, with her exquisite profile outlined like a cameo against the darkness of the inner room.

Somehow, Daisy Ellerton was always doing pretty things. Doubtless there were disagreeable services to be performed at Fernbank as well as elsewhere, but if any one did them, it was not Daisy. Her old aunt, Miss Gaston,

had been ill and died there, but Daisy had kept well away from the invalid's chamber.

"I never could endure sick people," she said, with a shudder. "The very sight of medicine makes me ill; and the air is always so stifling, and invalids groan so, and make themselves so disagreeable."

"But, Daisy, they can't help it," said downright Mary, who had worked like a beaver.

"Well, then, they ought to," asserted the beauty.

And her systematic avoidance of life's unpleasantness was all the easier, because, as she herself remarked, Mary seemed to take to such things naturally.

Here she sat, the blonde-haired, blue-eyed, elder sister, stitching in the pink reflections of the apple-trees, cool and tranquil, while Mary trudged up from the village, her face unbecomingly flushed, and her poor little patched boots covered with dust.

"Dear me!" said Daisy, critically surveying the newcomer, "how horridly hot and dusty you look! Did you get the French rolls?"

"Yes."

"And my note paper and postage stamps?"

"Yes."

"And the toilet soap? and coffee? I will not drink that miserable stuff they keep here any longer!" protested the spoiled girl.

"I have got them all," said Mary, putting her parcels on the table and stretching out her wearied arms to rest the muscles "and a letter I got from the postman, too!"

"For me?"

"Yes, for you. Daisy, why does Mr. Corder keep writing to you every quarter, just the same as he did when Aunt Jane was alive?"

"I suppose he wants to be sure that we are not dying of starvation," Daisy retorted, with a short laugh.

"We are no business of his!"

"He was Aunt Jane's nephew. We are her nieces."

"But it's on the other side of the family. We are no relations at all to him."

"And it's no great loss to us, I imagine," said Daisy, with a toss of the fair head. "A haughty, supercilious fellow, who has never taken the trouble to come up here and see us!"

"Why should he, Daisy? Oh, Daisy," exclaimed Mary, "what is that?"

For an oblong slip of paper had fallen out of the letter.

Daisy made a snatch at it, but she was too late. It was already in her sister's hand. She was looking blankly at it.

"A cheque!" she cried. "For twenty pounds! Daisy, why is Mark Corder sending you money?"

Daisy laughed discordantly.

"Oh, you goose," she cried. "It's for Aunt Jane's board and lodging and medical expenses."

"But Aunt Jane is dead and buried long ago. Oh, Daisy, you don't mean that—that he don't know it?"

"I do mean it," said Daisy, coldly. "I was told to send word to him, somehow I didn't. Aunt Jane surely made trouble enough when she was alive, without being an extra care after she was dead. And what do you suppose we were living on? Did you want to see me going out as nursery governess or to take a place as general servant yourself? I never saw anyone so unreasonable in my life."

"But, Daisy, that was a falsehood—is a falsehood!" protested indignant Mary.

"Who has told any falsehoods?"

"To go on receiving money for the use of a woman who is dead, from a man who is a stranger to us—don't you call that a falsehood?"

"He needn't have been a stranger if he had behaved himself as he ought."

"Give me the cheque, Daisy. Let me send it back!" pleaded Mary.

"I shall do nothing of the kind. Mr. Corder

will never miss the money. He's as rich as Croesus, and he is used to paying the sum once a quarter. Let him keep on!"

Mary's cheeks flamed, her eyes glittered. "Daisy!" she cried, "I never could have believed this of you."

Daisy laughed and shrugged her shoulders. She had most aggravating ways with her—this angel-faced young beauty, with the hair of gold and the eyes like melting blue jewels.

"It stings me to the very heart," said Mary, breathlessly, "to think that all these months I have been living on charity. But I will do so no longer. I should be afraid that Aunt Jane's ghost would rise up and haunt me. If you are going to keep up this tissue of deceit, you must do it by yourself."

"Then," said calm Daisy, "there will be the more for me to spend. Much obliged to you, I am sure, Donna Quixote!"

"Yes," said Mr. Corder, doffing his hat to the tall, lovely girl, who was so like a pure tall lily, "I suppose I ought to have been down here long ago to see my good old aunt. But we city people have so little leisure. She is as well as usual, I trust?"

"Oh, quite," faltered Daisy, growing hot and cold by turns.

"May I see her?"

"I—I shouldn't like to disturb her," stammered the girl, the chill drops of sweat breaking out on her brow as she thought of poor old Aunt Jane lying in the shadow of the churchyard wall.

"No? Well, I'm sorry, but never mind. I dare say you understand her condition a deal better than I do. And you are the young lady who has been her guardian angel? Oh, you need not blush! Mr. Wrighton, the banker, has told me how faithful a nurse you are. We are both Aunt Jane's relatives. Does not that constitute a sort of kinship between us?"

He held out his hand with a frank smile.

Daisy's heart beat high with exultation as she gave him her own in return.

"And your sister? You have a sister?"

Daisy hesitated.

In such a network of treachery it was impossible to escape without a lie.

"My sister has left us," she murmured. "She—she resented living on the money you sent us quarterly."

"As if it were not my duty to send it, your privilege to receive it," he cried. "Of all false pride, that is the falsest!"

"I endeavoured to convince her of that, but—"

"And she has gone away and left you with all the care of this infirm old lady on your hands?"

Daisy's eyelashes gradually sunk; her head drooped; but she uttered no word of disclaimer.

"I never saw such a Madonna face in my life," thought Mark Corder. "And she is my cousin, too, in a certain way. Why did Aunt Jane never tell me what a superb creature she was?"

As he pondered, he looked up at the porch roof, which was settled a little to one side; he observed a blind flapping hingeless in the wind.

"Things seem to be out of repair," said he. "I believe I had better prolong my stay a day or two, and give a little personal supervision to the place. You can tell me, I suppose, what needs doing?"

"I shall be so glad," said Daisy, "to be of use in any way."

If ever man was dangerously near the pit-fall of love at first sight, it was Mr. Corder that night.

Daisy's heart throbbed; she was a keen observer, and she felt somehow that the supreme moment of her life was drawing nigh.

Mark Corder went back to the inn, after promising to call early the next day.

From Fernbank to the White Lion was a mile by the high road. Across the fields and past the little stone church, one could econo-



miss half the distance—"for them," as the old folks said, "as liked to go past dead folk a-nights."

Mr. Corder entertained no superstitions on the subject; but he was a little startled when, in the light of the rising May moon, he saw a slight figure close by the wall, and heard something like a sob.

He paused. Just then the church door opened. Out came the grizzle-bearded sexton, with a lantern in his hand.

"Who is that, my man?" whispered Corder, motioning his hand toward the white, shadowy thing, that seemed a part of the quivering moonlight.

"Miss Jane Gaston's niece," the sexton answered, in an undertone. "Not the pretty one—the brown-complected one. She was powerful fond of the old lady. She often comes here between daylight and dark, and brings apple-blows and wild-lilies and the like."

"Miss Gaston's niece! But who is buried there?"

"Why, Miss Jane herself, to-be-sure—six good months ago. It were when the leaves fell, in November."

"Miss Gaston dead! My good friend, you must be mistaken."

"We's all liable to mistakes," slowly said the sexton, "but I'm right this time sure, squire, for I dug the grave an' lowered down the coffin myself. Come, Miss Mary, dear," he said, raising his voice, "I'm going home now, and I'd be loth to leave you here in this gloaming all by yourself."

"Are you Miss Mary Templeton?" said Mark, advancing to meet the slight figure that flitted among the graves. "I am Mark Corder, and until this moment I have been in utter ignorance of my aunt's death."

Mary hung down her head.

"Until to-day," she murmured, "I thought you knew it all. My sister—"

"I know," said Mark, compressing his lips. "I have just come from there. And you—can I see you safe to your home? Is it far?"

"I am boarding with the sexton's wife," hastily answered Mary. "When I found it out—that you were kept in ignorance, you know—I could not stay with Daisy any longer. I teach and do needlework, and earn a little for myself. Please, please, don't trouble to come out of your way, Mr. Corder."

She glided on in advance. Corder could not follow her against her will.

But walking behind with the sexton, he soon learned all—Mary's devotion, her fidelity to the poor old invalid, and Daisy's utter heartlessness.

As yet, however, no one knew of the crowning fraud by which the elder sister had managed still to receive Aunt Jane's quarterly allowance, and expend it for her own use and behoof. And Mr. Corder kept the secret.

He returned no more to Fernbank, greatly to fair Daisy's perplexity, but he often came down to the sexton's dwelling. And one day he asked Mary Templeton to be his wife.

"But it can't be possible," said Mary, "that you love me. If it were Daisy, now—"

"But it isn't Daisy!" declared Mark. "Darling, do you think I can't see that white soul of yours shining through its casket like a pure pearl? It is you that I love—your own sweet self!"

"I dunno," said the sexton, "whether folks know in the next world what's goin' on in this; but if they do, I'm master certain that old Miss Gaston is glad up in heaven that Miss Mary is married to Squire Corder. An' as for we down below—me an' my Betty—we're glad that Miss Daisy has got come up with as she deserves."

A NOVELTY in menu cards is popular proverb humorously illustrated to create suitable entertainment at the dinner table. The cards bear some well-known saying or phrase, which is illustrated by sketches.

## THE LETTER IN MR. SMITH'S POCKET.

—O—

"It fits you perfect, sir," said the young man in the tailor's shop. "It fits like paper on a wall," he was going to remark, but feeling this rather hackneyed, he added, "It fits like the skin on a sausage."

"A little loose, isn't it?" said the customer, trying to get a fair view of his own back in the glass—a feat which many people endeavour to perform every day of the year, and in which no one ever succeeds. "It seems to wrinkle."

"Why, that is because you turn and twist so," said the shopman. "Besides, you don't want it to fit too well, only just easy. Why, now, if you could see the elegant look of your back from where I stand," added the shopman, rapturously, "you'd buy it this minute for fear some other gentleman should get it first." And the speaker folded his arms on the pile of ready-made overcoats, all exactly alike, even to the last button, and felt that he could never do better than that while he lived.

And as his customer could not get behind himself, and was apt to believe what people said, he bought the coat.

Having put it on—it was cold, and he decided to wear it home—John Smith received his receipt and walked away with a little fluttered consciousness of his elegant back, that would have been very speedily dispelled could he have seen himself as others saw him, for the coat was much too big for him.

Meanwhile, another young man entered the clothing store, driven by the falling thermometer to purchase an overcoat.

"Exactly your size," said the talented shopman, as he took number two from the shelf and proceeded to force his customer into it.

"I don't quite think it is," said the victim, as he moved his arms uneasily. "It feels too tight."

"A new coat always does, don't you know," said the shopman, "if it's the fit it ought to be. A gentleman of your figure don't want to go about in a bag. Why, if you could stand where I stand and see how stylish your back looks, sir, you'd not let me take it off for fear someone else should snap it up, not knowing he couldn't look like that in it."

The customer fell into the trap as the other had fallen.

His vanity was tickled, and he revealed the fact in his countenance. He paid for the coat, and offered the shopman a cigar, and the latter gentleman remained dreaming of promotion; for now that he had tried a new method on two customers, and succeeded in making a sale each time, what might he not effect in the future?

Later on, the twin coats separated in the shop, met again on the backs of their purchasers.

"Mr. Smith," said a gentleman walking with a friend down a busy street, "let me introduce you to Mr. John Smith."

Coat number one bowed.

"I'm John Smith myself," said coat number two. "When Adam had grown tired of naming his descendants, he said, 'Let all the rest be called John Smith.'"

Then all three gentlemen laughed at the joke, and had a drink together on the strength of it. After that, as John Smith number two was a stranger in the city, Mr. John Smith number one took him to the theatre, and afterwards to have oysters at a supper room.

Meanwhile they talked business, and got on famously, and parted believing each other to be the very best fellows in the world.

Smith number one, being an householder, went directly home. His wife was sitting up for him, and came to the door in curl papers, with a kitchen candle in her hand, and a pink nose and eyelids indicative of weeping.

"I have been frightened to death, John,"

she declared. "I heard howls down the street, and thought a policeman must have you in charge."

"What for, my dear?" asked her spouse, bestowing a connubial kiss.

"Oh, because they love to do it," said Mrs. Smith, "if ever they catch anyone out very late. If you were driven to read the papers as you sat up alone, as often as I am, you'd know what was going on, too."

Mr. John Smith had married a silly little woman because, as he said, he liked that sort, and he only chuckled her under the chin and said,—

"Well, I'm home now, Tootsie. Let's shut up the house and go to bed. How does my new overcoat look?"

Mrs. Smith examined it critically.

"Well, it's a little loose, I think," said she.

"Well, I don't know. You don't want to look as if you were melted and poured into a coat, you know, Susie," said Mr. Smith number one.

"And here is a button coming off," said Mrs. Smith. "I'll sew it on before I go to bed, or you'll be going out without it, and everybody saying how I neglect you."

She seized the coat, and being now in the bedroom, she sat near the lamp, and began to look in her basket for needle and thread.

Meanwhile her lord and master, who had grown heavy under the influence of the theatre and oysters, undressed himself, and turned into bed, where he was soon snoring tremendously.

The button on, his wife turned the coat about, finding much fault with it, and turned out the pockets to see if they were strong.

"I never would buy ready-made things," she said to herself. "I can't see why John does it."

She put her hand into the breast pocket as she spoke, and felt an envelope.

"I wonder whether it is the letter I gave him to post this morning?" she said. "Just as likely as not he forgot it."

But it was not her letter. It was one addressed in a feminine hand to Mr. John Smith, and bearing the post mark "Brighton."

"That is where he spent three weeks some time ago," said Susie. "He never mentioned corresponding with anyone. To be sure, it may be a business matter. Some of those dreadful masculine women are in business just like men. Anyhow, I'll peep."

She looked over her shoulder, saw, as well as heard, that her John still slumbered, opened the sheet of note-paper, and read these words,—

"MY DARLING JACK,—

"How long you have been gone? I fairly pine for you. Your dear letters are all my joy. What an awful thing it is to be fond of a commercial traveller! I just wish I had chosen somebody that could settle down."

"If you really will bring me a present, and will have me say what it shall be—well, let it be a parasol, one of those in black lace over red satin; they are so stylish."

"Have you got your new coat yet? I am always so afraid you will catch cold."

"Your own  
"NELLIE."

The letter bore date:

"No. 101, Dane-street, Brighton,  
"Sept. 21, '86."

It was only three days old.

Susie did not scream, nor did she faint. She doubled up her small fists, and muttered "Revenge!" between her teeth.

"I'll kill her," she said, "and then I'll kill him, and then I'll kill myself. But first, I'll have it out with her."

In the morning, John Smith number one, who was in a great hurry, never noticed the peculiar sternness of his wife's demeanour.

"Good-bye, darling," he said, as he fumbled in his pockets. "Hang it all!"

"Have you lost anything?" asked his wife.

"Oh, hang it! Yes; some papers," replied Mr. Smith.

"Important ones?" queried Susie.

"Letters!" said her husband. "I can remember their contents, but not a certain address. Now, I wonder where I dropped them."

"Where were they from?" asked Susie.

"Oh, one was from Brighton," said John Smith, not guessing the trap sprung for him.

"Ah!" said Susie, bitterly.

He fancied his late home-coming on the previous night had made her cross.

"I'll come early to-night," he said, "and bring you a present."

His wife accepted his kiss and thought of Judas, and then the door shut behind him.

No sooner had he gone, than his wife rushed to her room, consulted the railway guide, dressed herself, and, with the letter in her pocket, hurried to the station, and took a return ticket to Brighton.

She had resolved to meet the fair and frail inhabitant of 101, Dane-street, and get back before her husband came home at night. She had plenty of time, and had been in Brighton frequently.

It was a small street with gardens before the houses, and 101 was on the end of the row. A dressmaker's card was in the window, and an old lady was just setting some potted flowers out to air, and when Susie inquired from behind her black dotted veil:

"Is there a person here whose first name is Nellie?" the old lady answered by calling out:

"Here, Nellie; somebody wants you," and a young woman, throwing down her work, obeyed the summons.

"Walk in," she said; and Mrs. John Smith entered a neat room. "You've come about a dress, I suppose?"

"No," replied Susie, who was not a woman of resources; "No; I've come about a man."

"A mantle?" inquired the young woman.

"No; a—plain man," replied Susie;

"that is, I mean only a man, not a mantle."

"If it is a vest," said the young woman, "I don't make those."

"It is not a vest," said Susie; "I wish it was. Oh! the blow was so sudden!"

"You don't want me to make a shroud?" asked the young woman, in an awed whisper; "because I couldn't do that."

"Oh!" screamed Susie, jumping from her chair, "what awful things you do say!"

"Then nobody is dead?" asked the girl.

"Only me," said Susie. "I'm dying."

"If you're not crazy, I wish you would explain," said the young woman.

On this Mrs. Smith put her hand into her pocket, and drew forth the letter she had found in her husband's new overcoat the night before.

"Did you write that?" she asked.

The young girl looked at it, turned it over, turned it upside down, and then back again, and finally read it.

"Yes," she said, when she had finished, "I wrote it, and I've got my answer."

"Who answered it?" asked Susie.

"The gentleman I wrote to—Mr. John Smith," replied Nellie.

"Oh, you wretch!" cried Susie.

"How dare you," gasped Nellie, "call me a wretch."

"How dare you write to him?" asked Susie.

"How dare I write to the man I am engaged to be married to?" shrieked Nellie. "Who are you? His mother? I believe you are his mother; they always make a fuss if a man chooses for himself."

"His mother!" cried Susie. "If you want to know who I am, I am his wife."

Nellie caught her breath and sat down upon a horsehair sofa with a long tidy on the back, and looked at her visitor.

"Didn't you know he was married?" asked Susie.

"My John Smith married? Why, he isn't. He never so much as kissed any lady before. He swore it," said Nellie.

"His name is John Smith, he is a commercial traveller, and he hasn't known you long," said Susie.

"I met him at a party a few months ago. It was love at first sight," said Nellie, sobbing. "He said so, anyhow."

"I found your letter in my husband's pocket," said Susie. "He was looking for it high and low this morning. You, I begin to believe, he has deceived you. He told you he was single."

"Yes, and we are to be married in two weeks, and my dress fits beautifully," moaned Nellie. "Oh, what will be my fate?" But, after all, you may be telling lies, for all I know. Why should I believe you?"

"I don't ask you to do so without proof," said Susie. "We will face him together."

"I'll be ready in a minute," said Nellie.

"And not a tear will I shed. Be ready in one moment. What a wretch!"

"Ah, what a wretch!" echoed Susie, from her seat near the window.

Nellie came downstairs in a few minutes, with her hat on, and the two were about to leave the house together, when a noise of steps was heard in the gravel path without, and Nellie, peeping through the curtained window, called out:

"Why, there he is! He has come from town. He has got the parcel for me. Hide, hide somewhere, and let me talk to him first."

As she spoke she dragged poor Susie out of sight and crammed her into a corner behind a walnut bookcase. Now that it had come it was too dreadful to bear, Susie said to herself. The next instant some one uttered these words:

"What is the matter, Nellie? Why won't you kiss me? Why, Nellie, you wrote me such a lovely letter, and I've brought the parcel."

There was a sound as of pursuing and flying steps, then:

"Don't touch me!" squealed Nellie, "I've found you out. Your wife has been here."

"My wife!" roared the masonic voice.

"Yes," said Nellie. "Here she is."

And diving behind the bookcase, she dragged the wretched Susie, now shivering with shame and terror, in the middle of the room.

"This is what your long days in London meant, eh?" squealed Nellie. "If she hadn't found my letter in your pocket I'd have been married to you in two weeks. There, take your wife and go home, and kill her if you want to, for I just hate you both. Oh, you horrid old Mormon!"

"Oh! oh! oh!" wailed Susie. "Oh, oh! don't, please don't!"

Meanwhile, the accused faced the lady with a look of scorn.

"My wife!" said he. "Why, you ugly little demon, do you dare to say I'm your husband? You—"

"No, I'm not! No, your not! No, I didn't! Oh! oh! oh!" moaned Susie.

"I never saw her before," cried the gentleman, who was no other than Mr. John Smith number two. "She's an imposter! I'll have her arrested!"

"And I never saw him before," moaned the wife of Mr. John Smith number one. "But the letter was in my John's pocket, and I thought—of course I thought—it was written to him. It has his name on it—"

"I see," remarked Nellie's adorer, ecstatically. "I understand. Your husband and I have the same name. If he travels for Bixby Brothers, I dined with him last night. We went to the play, took supper and changed coats. I found a lot of letters not belonging to me, in my pocket this morning. Here they are. You see our coats are both alike. Ready-made coats—just bought that day. We spoke about them. Bought at the same place—"

"Oh, don't say any more," sobbed Mrs. John Smith number one. "Don't, please; I've been such a fool."

"So have I," said Nellie.

"Well, said Smith number two, "we began it by changing coats."

"Dear John," said Nellie, "can you forgive me?"

"Ask him not to tell my John," said Susie; "he'd never forgive me. And if that coat is just the same as John's, you'll have to sew on the bottom left-hand button before he loses it off," with which words the ladies kissed and parted.

Mrs. Smith got back in good time, unexpected; but I am afraid John Smith number two told the whole story to John Smith number one, the day he brought Susie to Nellie's wedding.

## FACETIÆ.

A BRIGHT boy is not always a polished boy. LIGHTNING never strikes twice in the same place. It doesn't have to—once is generally sufficient.

"WHY, Norah, how dusty the chairs are!" "Yes, mim. There's nobody sat on them this morning."

It takes two to make a bargain, and a third party to find out that it wasn't so much of a bargain, after all.

THE animosities of Washington's time are things of the past. We've buried the hatchet, now let's bury the cherry tree.

WHY is the letter "R" like the countenance of Hamlet's father? Because it appears more in sorrow than in anger.

A REPORTER, describing a collection of bric-a-brac, says: "The visitor's eye will be struck on entering the room with a porcelain umbrella."

FIRST Physician: "Did you succeed with that last patient of yours?" Second Physician: "No, he got well; the druggist filled the wrong prescription."

MONSIEUR LE BARON: "I ask your mamma, and she'll give her consent—now—I—er—" Miss Bullion: "I am so glad! But won't it be funny to call you papa?"

ANXIOUS Mamma: "Little Dick is upstairs, crying with the toothache." Practical Papa: "Take him round to the dentist's." "I haven't any money." "You won't need any money. The toothache will stop before you get there."

OUR SEMI-DETACHED NEIGHBOURS.—Grace: "And yet, dear, how little we have seen of each other lately—considering there is only a partition wall between us." Emily: "But then, dear, it is such a comfort to feel that you are on the other side."

"THE question 'Is marriage a failure?' has not been settled yet, I believe," said the fair Rosalind, as she looked Algernon square in the eye. "No, indeed; but so far as we are concerned, we had better undertake to solve it. Don't you think so?" Invitations are out.

CITY Niece (in tears): "Oh, aunt, I'm in the greatest affliction!" Country Aunt: "What's up?" City Niece: "Oh, I wish I could express myself." Country Aunt: "Well, you city girls beat me. What do you want to express yourself for? Take a train if you want to go anywhere."

"THE butcher is here, ma'am," announced Mary. "What shall I order?" "Dear me, I haven't thought. What can we have for dinner, Mary?" "I don't know, ma'am," was the quiet reply. "Oh, can't you make a suggestion?" "I can try," said Mary, cheerfully. "What do you make it of?"

FIRST Tramp: "Have you had any victuals to-day, Sammy?" Second Tramp: "Not a victual. Have you?" "No." "Hang the house-cleaning season. I'll starve before it is over. You can't strike a place where they don't want you to work like a hired man before they'll give you a month's eat."



## SOCIETY.

A *FEATURING* in the decoration of dinner-tables this year is the quantity of flowers used. It is said that £5,000 is spent in London every day in flowers.

A NEW industry has been invented by a clever English girl. She calls herself an accountant and auditor for large households. She finds plenty of employment in looking after the business of a few families of large expenditure whose heads have not taste for the work.

STIFF, straight, and many-bowed sashes are things of the past. Those of the present are soft and graceful. They are folded round the waist, and then fall limply on the skirt.

THE favourite stockings this season are still the open worked black silk that reigned supreme last year, accompanied by the low shoes to which the French apply the odd adjective *décolleté*.

I HEAR from Germany that the bridal veil worn by Princess Louise of Schleswig-Holstein was composed of over one hundred and fifty squares of lace, each of which was made by a Silesian lace maker, whom it took about ten days to elaborate the squares of three inches. The wedding gift of Prince Frederick Leopold to his bride Princess Louise of Schleswig, is a diamond diadem, the precious stones in which weigh one hundred and seventy carats.

THE Princess of Greece wore on her marriage day, under her diamond crown, and at the bottom of her dress, some myrtles she cut in Greece with her father, and although these were about a fortnight old, she had contrived to keep them fresh. She is passionately fond of Greece.

IT is said that the Duke of Portland has decided to devote all his past and future winnings on the turf to the erection and endowment of almshouses for poor people at Welbeck, and that the scheme was originated and suggested by the Duchess, who has the scheme much at heart.

IT is satisfactory to note that at least one prima donna has resolved to decline to accept "floral tributes" on the operatic stage. The practice has become so much abused of late years that it is high time that a general prohibition were issued by managers.

FASHIONABLE women have a new way of arranging their visiting lists. They put the names of their friends down in alphabetical order, with marginal notes of "at home" days. This plan is said to greatly simplify the labour of keeping up calling relations with a large number of acquaintances.

M. WORTH announces that the following will be the tints most in vogue this year. In greens we have the "dressed ghost," "weary watermelon," and "retired cheese." "Spoiled moon" will also be considered very chic. Among the mauves and heliotropes "forgotten lobster" is the favourite, although "faded apoplexy" will please many. The rouge to be worn with the shades should be qualified with a touch of purple.

THE latest thing in fashions for men is known as the American shoulder. It consists of a coat padded at the shoulders in a manner quite unique. Pieces of lead of an imposing size are employed in the process, and when the dude is properly "fixed up" he appears with a sort of epaulette arrangement that is calculated to transfix the gaze of the less enlightened observer. The "American shoulder" is only just coming into vogue, but it is already decidedly conspicuous. A West-end tailor says that he is putting twelve ounces of lead into some of his "padding."

Few people believe the report that Lord Salisbury will visit Ireland. Among the number is the premier.

## STATISTICS.

THE people in the United States use annually about seven postcards for every man, woman, and child; that is to say, their total consumption for a year reaches 100,000,000.

IT is calculated that there are 3,815,040 statute acres in Yorkshire, and 3,466,480 letters in the Bible—that is, in the Old and New Testaments.

THE total value of fish including shell fish, landed on the English and Welsh coasts from the fishing grounds during the five months ended the 31st of May was £1,035,962, being a decrease of £16,185, as compared with the corresponding five months of last year.

THE deepest boring into the earth is the Schladetbach diamond mine, which is 1,743 metres deep—i.e., 11 times as much as the height of Cologne Cathedral. It has taken six years to penetrate so far down, at a cost of £10,500, and the mine has since had to be abandoned. Other deep mines are at Elmshoer (Silesia), 1,338 metres; Unseburg, near Magdeburg, 1,295 metres; Spereberg, near Berlin, 1,272 metres.

## GEMS.

TO-MORROW is the day on which idle men work and fools reform.

HE that would be angry and sin not, must not be angry with anything but sin.

THERE is nothing like courage in misfortune. Next to faith in God and in His overruling providence, a man's faith in himself is his salvation. It is the secret of all power and success. It makes a man strong as the pillared iron or elastic as the springing steel.

LIKE flakes of snow that fall unperceived upon the earth, the seemingly unimportant events of life succeed one another. As the snow gather together, so are our habits formed. No single flake that is added to the pile produces a sensible change; no single action creates, however it may exhibit, a man's character; but as the tempest hurls the avalanche down the mountains, and overwhelms the inhabitant and his habitation, so passion, acting upon the elements of mischief, which pernicious habits have brought together by imperceptible accumulation, may overthrow the edifice of truth and virtue.

## HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

POTATOES ESCALLOPED.—Boil two pounds of potatoes and mash in the usual way, with the yolk of an egg, well beaten, and one tablespoonful of warm milk. Have ready some nice clean scallop-shells well-buttered (pattypans or saucers will do); put in the potatoes and make them smooth at the top, cross them with a knife; strew a few fine bread crumbs over the surface, and then sprinkle a few drops of melted butter with a paste-brush. Set the scallops in a Dutch-oven, or on a hot stove, till nicely browned on the top; take carefully out of the shells, and brown on the other side. Garnish with chopped parsley.

TAKE 4 oz. of chocolate, 3 oz. of fine white flour, 3 oz. of butter, 3 oz. of powdered sugar, three eggs, and one teaspoonful of baking-powder. First grate the chocolate. Beat the butter and sugar together until they are white-looking and of the consistency of cream; then add the flour and yolks of the eggs. Whip the whites of the eggs until they are quite stiff; then lightly mix them with the chocolate, baking-powder, and other mixture. Have some small cake moulds well buttered; fill each tin three-parts full with the mixture, and bake in a moderately hot oven for about ten or fifteen minutes. Turn the cakes on a sieve to cool a little before serving. Store in a tin box with a closely fitting lid.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

THE massacre of English words still proceeds in Paris. On a *fivecloquer* is the latest atrocity; it means that they take tea at five o'clock.

THE fleece of ten goats and the work of several men for half a year are required to make a genuine cashmere shawl a yard and a-half wide. No wonder they are so costly.

THE slide trombone, the most perfect of brass musical instruments, is the sockbut of the ancients, and was revived about 1790, after a model found among the ruins of Pompeii.

THE grandmother of the Emperor of China is 89 years old, blind, deaf, and a cripple, and the other day her loving grandson presented her with 500 singing birds, 200 silk dresses and 100 musical instruments.

A GRAND old regiment, the 23rd Royal Welsh Fusiliers, is about to celebrate its bicentenary, it having been raised in June 1689. During the long period of its existence the regiment has maintained its connexion more or less with Wales.

SUNFLOWERS are used in Wyoming Territory for fuel. The stalks when dry are as hard as maple wood and make a hot fire, and the seed-heads with the seeds in are said to burn better than the best hard coal. An acre of sunflowers will furnish fuel for one stove for a year.

IN the earlier ages the Romans used neither saddles nor stirrups. Saddles were in use in the third century, and are mentioned as made of leather in 304 A.D. They were known in England about 600 A.D. Anne, queen of Richard II., introduced side-saddles for ladies.

THE Emperor of China has presented his bride with an immense tiara of gold, with a very lofty cap of Siberian sable, embroidered with rows of pearls, and the feathers of the golden pheasant. Twenty skilled workmen were employed for two months in making the headdress.

A RECENT Paris fashion is that of wearing huge rosettes on slippers; not ordinary ones but the great roses of the dim, distant past. Charles I.'s gentry wore such like, but these, I need scarcely say, are now reserved for ladies only. They make a large foot look small, and a small one quite fairy like. The rosette must be of the same shade as the slipper, and set up high over the instep.

THE military custom of saluting by bringing the hand into a horizontal position over the eyebrows, is thus accounted for: It is supposed to date back to the tournaments of the middle ages, when, after the Queen of Beauty was enthroned, the knights who were to take part in the sports of the day marched past the dais on which she sat, and as they passed shielded their eyes from the rays of her beauty.

ONE of the Shah's stumbling-blocks in his path of reform is his own superstition. Whenever he attends any public function during his present journey in Europe, he is careful to have at his side a little boy of five or six years old. We believe that this lad is supposed to ward off the dangers of the evil eye from the sublime ruler. A famous seer in Teheran told the Shah that he need fear nothing so long as he kept this talismanic boy always in sight.

BEFORE marriage a Japanese daughter is a child, owing the profoundest submission to her parents and relatives. She has no voice in the choosing of her husband, whom she barely sees, and of whom she knows practically nothing before the nuptial ceremony. The sexes make pairs, not matches, and the pairing is managed by a go-between. After marriage the wife is little better than a slave or chattel. Docility, sacrifice, and self-effacement are well-nigh the sum of her daily duties.

## NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

**COMO.**—The first visit of the Shah of Persia to Europe was in 1873.

**SHORT TOURS.**—Brussels is the nearest capital in a direct line to London.

**J. D.**—Many accounts of Father Damien's work have appeared in the papers; we know of no others yet.

**T. W.**—Blondin is still alive. He was performing in the Agricultural Hall, London, only a few months ago.

**IGNORANT.**—"Worth," in proper names, as in Tamworth, Kenilworth, &c., signifies that the place stands on a tongue of land.

**TENANT.**—In the absence of agreement the tenant must repair glass broken by a hailstorm, either in a verandah or in a greenhouse.

**J. SMITH.**—The word "pedler" is said to be derived from "ped," the name given to a wicker basket, originally employed for carrying fish.

**TROUBLED MOTHER.**—The chief difficulty in family government arises from the fact that so few parents ever learn to govern themselves.

**A LOVER.**—A generous feed of corn in the evening will induce turkeys and ducks to come home to roost. Let them go off in the morning with a light breakfast.

**H. S.**—A parent should never punish a child when he is the least bit "put out" with it, or for any reason whatever except the highest good of the child itself.

**F. F. H.**—What you saw was a halo; being some distance from the moon it denoted bad weather, the mist through which the light pierced being near the earth.

**BOB.**—If rent is calculated by the year, and the tenancy commenced at the Christmas quarter, six months' notice, to expire at Christmas, must be given.

**EMMA.**—You can do nothing. Never expect gratitude. If you do, you will be disappointed. Try not to expect too much of men, and be content with small privileges.

**DOBBIE'S BOY.**—Cement to repair tortoise-shell articles: Mastic thirty parts, shellac ninety parts, turpentine six parts, spirit of wine ninety per cent. three hundred and fifty parts.

**TOURIST.**—Arundel Castle belongs to the Duke of Norfolk. It is situate near Littlehampton, and you may procure a guide from the post-office. The guide will cost you a shilling.

**N. S.**—The property must be sold subject to your agreement. You would give to or receive notice from the purchaser of the property, or if it is not sold, the executors of the deceased landlord.

**A BET.**—Fanny Ellaler, the renowned dancer, died in the city of her birth—Vienna—November 27, 1894. She was born in 1810, and made her first appearance in the ballet at the early age of nine years.

**SUFFERER.**—Your case is deserving of the utmost sympathy. Return at once to your native land, and seek advice at an orthopedic hospital. As to the tea and the novel, you will have to send a postal order.

**ANXIOUS.**—The mother is powerless, and cannot compel the father to support his child. If he is a man with any feeling, he will act righteously; but there is no claim on him, and even if he were married, he would escape his responsibility.

**F. F. C.**—1. If a married woman dies without a will, leaving money in the bank, it goes to her husband. 2. If a married man dies leaving money in the bank, a third goes to the widow and the remainder to his children in equal shares.

**DESPAIRING JANE.**—You must not complain because a stranger does not make himself known to you. Silly conduct in speaking to him was enough to make him think you forward, and you can right matters only by preserving a proper dignity.

**UNHAPPY OLIVER.**—You were not married to the Mormon elder; you were merely "sealed." You formed one of a harem, and your legal claim cannot be recognised in a country where not only polygamy but bigamy is punishable by seven years' penal servitude.

**DAMON.**—You seem to have "soured" on beauty, and taken a rather one-sided view of the subject. We do not know that a lady deserves any credit for personal beauty, but she will be pretty certain to obtain credit and admiration both for it, or on account of it.

**MARY.**—Salicylic acid is a white solid. We do not see how it can be used to preserve herbs, if they are dry. If you dissolved one quarter of an ounce in a gallon of cold water, dipped the herbs in, well drained them, and then hung them up to dry, it would preserve them from chance mildew.

**MADAME VILLARI.**—Byron's sonnet is included in every English edition of his poems with which we are acquainted. Certainly it is in Moxon's series, which costs three shillings and ninepence, and certainly it is in the two-volume edition illustrated by Turner and published by Murray.

**BERTHA.**—You would act most wrongly if you welcomed your old lover back. Look at the situation calmly. He deserts you and becomes the slave of a woman of bad character. Now, if he could do that before marriage, do you think you could keep him true after marriage? A man who is once infatuated in the way you describe rarely escapes from the evil bondage; the wicked woman masters his will, and he becomes a mere puppet. You may not be able to forget him; but you must not try to attract him in any way.

**X. Y. Z.**—Critics differ so widely in their estimates of the literary geniuses of the world, that it is difficult to decide to which particular country the palm should be awarded. We suggest that you read the histories of Greece, Italy, England, France, Germany, and our own America, and form a judgment of your own.

**D. D.**—After loving a lady six years, without being able to get an introduction to her, although you have "tried every way possible to do so," you are entitled to the privilege of informing her of your dilemma, either by note or word of mouth. Why not call at her house and ask her mother or father to permit you to call on her?

**MISS GRANDON.**—"Wilhelm Meister," by Thomas Carlyle, is the book suggested to read on the subject of your inquiry. Carlyle probably did more during his lifetime to familiarize the readers of English works with the productions of Goethe than any other writer, though the "Life of Goethe" has been extensively popularised in England by G. H. Lewes.

**READER.**—Peter Wilkins is the hero of a work entitled "The Voyage of Peter Wilkins." It was written by Robert Pultock, about 1750. Peter is a mariner, who, like Robinson Crusoe, is thrown on a distant uninhabited shore, after encountering various mishaps on the ocean. The stores, utensils, &c., of which mention is made, were taken from the wreck of the vessel in which he sailed.

**J. HAMMOND.**—Imitation pearls are not uncommon. They were first invented in 1856 by one Jaquin, a French enameller on glass. The little glass globules of which they consist are first lined with a mixture of isinglass and "essence of the East," and then stuffed with melted wax. This *concoction* is made of the pearly matter which is found at the base of the scales of the whiting, preserved in ammonia.

**BARRARA.**—As you have had such long experience in the post-office, it would be a pity for you to go out to service, although you might live honourably and comfortably as a servant. Write a nice quiet letter. Like that which you send us, and tell your member of Parliament how you are situated; he may be able to help you—for in your remote district educated women capable of transacting official business are very scarce.

## EPITAPH ON A ROSE.

Here lies the rose which yesterday  
With beauty's hair was braided;  
Its stem is gone, its petals bright  
Are now all crushed and faded.

'Twas plucked at morn, to please the eye,  
To bloom a few short hours,  
And then be cast aside to die—  
The rose, the queen of flowers.

And thus lies many a noble heart,  
Though none have wept or mourned it,  
Which ne'er had known the spoiler's art,  
Had virtue less adorned it.

W. J.

**N. D.**—One of the most important discoveries in the manufacture of glass was the result of a curious accident. A man was engaged in melting some glass in a large pot, when it fell down, and the liquid ran along the smooth pavement. Not caring to lose his glass, he took up the stones, when he found the glass in a sheet, much smoother than could be obtained by blowing. This led to the "casting" of glass in sheets and plates.

**T. TRENT.**—If you have lost the ring which the young lady gave you in exchange for one that you presented to her, tell her so. Of course you cannot return it. You must be your own judge as to the cause of her casting you off. It may be that she is only trying your temper and constancy. Girls in love are full of freaks—sometimes—and do queer things without meaning any harm; at least, so people say who pretend to know all about them.

**IRISH JEM.**—The exact age at which Lady Sydney Owenson Morgan, the Irish novelist and critic, died, is not accurately known. The editor of her works, Hopworth Dickson, respected her prejudices against disclosing her real age, which she kept a secret. Her answer to inquiries upon the subject was, "Once upon a time on Christmas Day." She is supposed to have been born about 1783. A few weeks before her death (1859) she sent to a London periodical some bright verses, and protested against being called old.

**OLD SUBSCRIBER.**—Functional disorder of the heart is often mistaken for organic disease of that organ. According to authority upon the subject, "there is a constitutional tendency to disorder of the heart's action in some persons, who may be said to have irritable hearts. These persons are often subject to it more or less during their lives." A physical examination by a competent person should always be made, not only because it relieves anxiety on the part of the patient, but because it may lead to a cure of the trouble complained of.

**AN OLD FRIEND.**—The annuities now paid by the British people to the Royal Family for its support are stated to be as follows: The Queen, \$1,225,000; Prince of Wales, \$800,000; Princess of Wales, \$550,000; Crown Princess of Prussia, \$400,000; Duke of Edinburgh, \$125,000; Princess Christian, \$30,000; Princess Louise, \$30,000; Duke of Connaught, \$125,000; Princess Beatrice, \$30,000; Duke of Cambridge (the Queen's cousin), \$60,000; Duchess of Teck (the Queen's cousin), \$35,000; Duchess of Albany, \$30,000; Duchess of Mecklenburg-Strelitz (the Queen's cousin), \$15,000.

**LEARNER.**—A thermostat is a self-acting apparatus for the regulation of temperature by the unequal expansion of different metals by heat, as in regulating automatically the draught of a stove. The circuit closer of automatic fire alarms is a thermostat which acts by the expansion of the metal whenever a fire raises the temperature of the atmosphere surrounding the thermostat. When the metal expands it closes an electric circuit connected with a fire alarm.

**VESTMENT.**—1. A pallium is a consecrated vestment worn by the Pope, and by him it is a mark of honour to those deemed worthy to wear it. Its form is that of a scarf, composed of white wool, and embroidered with purple crosses. 2. A palimpsest is a manuscript which has been written upon twice, the first writing having been erased to make place for the second. Also a monumental brass which has been taken up, turned, and engraved on the reverse side with another figure.

**CONSOLE.**—Wood-carving is becoming quite an occupation for gentlemen, not the poor and decayed type, but those who have time and money at command. In Sweden this seems a real sensible craze, and is one of the people's chief recreations through the long, dark winter. Impatient learners soon give it up, and so do awkward creatures whose chief knack consists in cutting their fingers; but average industry soon triumphs over a few difficulties and turns out all kinds of wooden sculpture after a little practice.

**KEITH NORMAN.**—The word "handicap" stands for hand in cap, from the drawing of lots out of a hat or cap. It was the name of a game at cards played during the Stuart period, which is said to have been not unlike loo, with this difference: the winner of one trick had to put a double stake into the pool, the winner of two tricks a triple stake, and so on. Thus in racing, so that competitors might have an equal chance of success, it was found necessary to penalise previous winners; and the name of the old card game came to be applied to this qualifying. As used in the sentence given by you it means "impeded."

**WORKMAN.**—A non-poisonous fly-paper is made by pouring half-a-gallon of water over one pound of quassia-wood, allowing it to stand over night, and then boiling the strained fluid down to one quart. The wood must be again boiled with one quart of water until one pint remains, when the two infusions are mixed together and one-half to three-quarters of a pound of sugar dissolved in it. The paper is now passed through this fluid, drained, and hung up to dry. Blotting paper of any colour may be used, and a small piece of it thus prepared placed in water in a saucer will prove a very effective destroyer of the pests. Persian insect powder, sold by all druggists, and blown into the air by means of an insect powder gun, will quickly rid a room of flies and it is a most effectual remedy for the removal of roaches and ants.

**M. L. F.**—1. The Mohammedans revere Christ, and blasphemy of His name is punishable with death; but they deny that He is God or the Son of God, though they regard His birth as miraculous. They do not believe he was crucified, maintaining that some other person suffered in His place, while He ascended to God. The reverence they pay Him is second only to that paid to Mohammed. They believe that Christ will come again upon the earth, and that His coming will be one of the signs of the approach of the last judgment. 2. As before stated, the idea of God held by Mohammedans does not differ essentially from the Christian, except that they reject entirely the doctrine of the Trinity, they believing that a great number of prophets have been divinely commissioned at various times, among whom six were sent to proclaim new laws and dispensations, viz., Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Mohammed.

**POPEYE.**—A correspondent kindly sends us the following eye flirtation, for which several readers have asked of late: Winking the right eye, I love you; winking the left eye, I hate you; winking both eyes slowly, yes; closing both at once, we are watched; winking the right eye twice, I am engaged; winking the left eye twice, I am married; dropping the eyelids, may I kiss you? raising them, kiss me; closing the right eye slowly, you are beautiful; closing the left eye slowly, try and love me; covering the eyes with both hands, by-by; placing right forefinger to right eye, do you love me? left forefinger to the left eye, may I see you home? right forefinger to left eye, you are beautiful; left third finger to left eye, so are you; right little finger to right eye, aren't you ashamed? winking both eyes very quickly, no. This we have every reason to believe is correct, although there may be readers inclined to say, "that's all in my eye."

THE LONDON READER, Post-free. Three-halfpence Weekly; or Quarterly One Shilling and Eightpence.

ALL BACK NUMBERS, PARTS AND VOLUMES are in print, and may be had of all booksellers.

NOTICE.—Part 329, Now Ready, price Sixpence, post free, Eightpence. Also Vol. LIII., bound in cloth, 4s. 6d.

ALL LETTERS TO BE ADDRESSED TO THE EDITOR OF THE LONDON READER, 334, Strand, W.C.

†† We cannot undertake to return rejected manuscripts.

London: Published for the Proprietor, at 334, Strand, by J. R. SPECK; and Printed by WOODFALL and KNIGHT, 79 to 76, Long Acre, W.C.